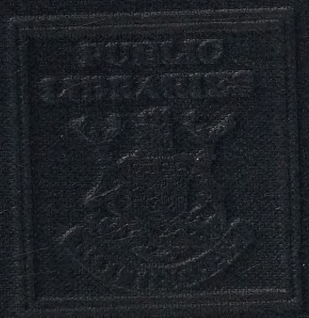

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Being the Substance of Public Lectures, given at University College, London, during the Sessions 1918-1922

BY

ILLIT GRØNDAHL

LECTURER IN NORWEGIAN, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

AND

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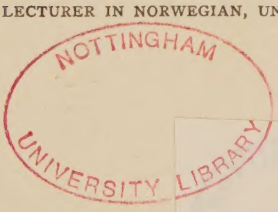

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THE MEMORY OF

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THE FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE
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FOREWORD

THE following chapters, which are based on Public Lectures in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at University College, London, are intended to provide an introduction to the study of Norwegian Literature by describing briefly the lives and works of representative authors from the time of Holberg up to the New Romanticism appearing towards the end of the 19th century. Our aim has been to give the principal features of the subject, as well as opinions generally accepted in Norway, rather than to propound original views. A short review of traits of Norwegian nature and national character has been prefixed.

Our chief sources of biography and criticism have been the general works by J. B. Halvorsen and Henrik Jæger; further, Gerhard Gran: *Norsk Aandsliv i Hundrede Aar, Henrik Ibsen, Nordmænd i det 19de Aarhundrede* (ed.); Halvdan Koht: *Henrik Wergeland*; Arne Løchen: *J. S. Welhaven*; Alf Collett: *Camilla Collett*; Edmund Gosse: *Henrik Ibsen*; Chr. Collin: *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson*, Introduction to the Jubilee Edition of *Peer Gynt*; Arne Garborg: *Jonas Lie*; Valborg Erichsen and Paula Berg: Introduction and Notes to the "Standard Edition" of Jonas Lie's Works; Mathilde Schjøtt: *Alexander Kielland*; P. Stavnem: Introduction and Notes to the "Standard Edition" of Kielland's Works; finally, various articles in the Norwegian quarterly *Edda* and other periodicals.

With regard to English translations of Norwegian works and to English interest in Norway and its literature, we refer the reader to C. B. Burchardt: *Norwegian Life and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1920).

In the preparation of the present volume, I. Grøndahl has composed Chapters I.–V. and X.–XII. O. Raknes has written Chapters VI.–IX. and XIII.–XV., utilizing also previous lectures by Grøndahl on the same authors. The chapters have been discussed between us in order to establish sequence and avoid repetition; some overlapping was inevitable, and may not be wholly undesirable.

Our thanks are due to Mr. J. S. Thornton and to Mr. G. G. Berry for valuable advice in the lecture work, and particularly to Mr. Oswald Doughty, B.Litt., Assistant Lecturer in English at University College, London, who has read through the greater part of the manuscript and thereby done much to reduce the formal imperfections of our work.

Our excuse for publishing a book, the incompleteness and many other defects of which we are painfully aware of, is the lack, so far, of any introductory work for the general reader and the student approaching the subject of Norwegian Literature.

ILLIT GRØNDAHL.

OLA RAKNES.

LONDON, *June* 1923.

NOTE.—Chapter XVI. has been composed from a lecture by O. Raknes on "Knut Hamsun" and one by I. Grøndahl on "Norwegian Writers of the Present." The list of principal English translations has been compiled by Miss Karen Rosenstand and revised and augmented by Mr. Percy Hawkins, to both of whom the authors' best thanks are due.

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CHAPTERS IN NORWEGIAN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY VIEW OF LAND AND PEOPLE

AS we are going to examine some features of the literature of Norway, it will be worth while first to pay a visit to the land and the people. Let us approach Norway in company with the poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who sees his native country as one returning from abroad sees it :

> " *Norge, Norge !* rising blue from the grey-green sea,
> islands about her like young birds,
> deep-reaching fjords
> greeted from inland by valley and river ;
> cornfields and meadows—runes in the woodland—
> mountains guarding the peace within,
> and bright towns facing the sea." [1]

We shall try in the following to analyse this bold bird's-eye view of Norway, and to read some of these scattered runes in the woodland.

The above lines may convey some of the *ruggedness* that is peculiar both to the first aspect of Norway and to the character of the people. It looms large in our literature, in Bjørnson, Ibsen, Lie, Elster, in Garborg and other New Norse (*Landsmaal*) authors.

Such an inhospitable coast, one would think, could hardly have got a population at all, if it had not been for a sea extremely rich in fish. Through the long winters the settler might well long for a warmer land ; but " when the spring sun played on the hillsides, then he loved his home and his shore."

The grey, furrowed islets of the " skjærgaard "—the chain of thousands of islands, large and small, stretching all round the coast of Norway—are in summer streaked with green. The skerries are mottled with yellow, brown, and purple from heather and moss,

[1] Free rendering, abbreviated.

and girdled with slowly waving seaweed. Gulls flash in the light-blue air, competing with seals and men for the fish. Here and there the rocks are white with spread-out drying cod, which, preserved by the pure air and long daylight of the northern summer, is sent out to the Roman Catholic nations of Southern Europe.

Following the thousand miles of coast from South to North one finds variety enough. In the farthest South the low, bare strand of *Lister*. There, the saying is, grows neither tree nor bush : " they birch their children with a lump of peat."

West and North stretch the flat beach and moors of *Jæren*, looking like a patch of Jutland heath stranded against our rocks ; the background is formed by a long row of hills, which presently rise and come nearer to the sea.

The long and tortuous waterway inside the natural breakwater of the " skjærgaard " with its infinite number of landmarks has through the centuries formed a splendid school and training-ground for navigation. From here the seafarers set out who reached Iceland, Greenland, and North America in the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, the Vikings who visited the shores of the North Sea, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean, and founded states there. For a couple of hundred years they settled on the West coast and islets of Scotland and in the East of Ireland. Friendly relations were entertained in subsequent times, as for instance the important timber trade with England in the 18th century, which brought with it a distinct influence towards colouring Norwegian life with English ideas ; thus our old connections were re-established. Few countries owe more to the sea. Its warm currents bring climatic conditions belonging to far more southerly latitudes. A large proportion of the people live along the coast. Shipping and fishery rank among the chief industries.

From the coast the great fjords, with branches in every direction, cut fifty to a hundred miles into the mountainous interior. Looking inland along the rising mountain wall, streaked with white mist and shining glaciers, one wonders where the habitable land can be ; but drawing nearer one sees the green about the foot of the precipices, and the fair valleys rising gently from the head of the fjord. The fjord itself is a continuation of the valley under water, formed in glacial times, with the same level bottom and the same steep sides.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good. These threatening screes and the boulders tumbling down from the crags overhead help to gather up the heat of the sun and render the inner fjord districts rich in fruit. Among the wild, grand scenery of *Hardanger* and *Sogn* are found the most considerable orchards in Norway,

from which barges with apples go every autumn to Bergen, the central busy mart and capital of the Westland.

The farms along the lower part of the slopes consist, or consisted, of a number of little grey wooden houses, with grass-covered roofs. One is the dwelling-house, one the storehouse (*stabur*), raised on stumps or stones, another the wash-house, besides the stables for the various beasts, and the barns, the wood-house, the corn-drying hut—altogether a little town round its central grassy square, the *tûn*.

In some isolated districts life is often one long struggle with a grudging Nature, and one cannot wonder at the tendency to emigration; we remember, from Bjørnson's story, *Arne's* yearning out over the high mountains—until he finds a field of activity within the boundaries of his own country, and stays there striving to make the faults and shortcomings emigrate instead. The modern Norseman is well on the way to tame the gigantic forces of Nature, like Aladdin in the fairy-tale rubbing the magic ring and drawing in all the ministering spirits of air, earth, and water: electricity, nitrogen, and the rest.[1] Lately he is even hopeful of drawing directly on the mill which, according to ancient lore, stands grinding salt on the bottom of the sea.[2]

Proceeding on our way northwards, we pass through the broad, fertile, energetic *Trondheim* district, with its great historical traditions—its ancient city and exquisite cathedral, hallowed to King Olav, the national saint—once the might and marrow of the kingdom, as the Saga has it, and still a mainstay of the North.

From here, for hundreds and hundreds of miles, stretches northward the much sung and comparatively little known *Nordland*, the land of fantastic proportions, wild beauty, and weird imagination. The midsummer sun, circling continuously round, throws, as it were, a legendary halo over the whole region. Jonas Lie, the first modern author to disclose its peculiar character to his countrymen, speaks of "the intensified natural conditions, the powerful contrasts of light and shade, the marvellous scale of tints, the scent-laden summer air, the sunshine down through the transparent sea." Considering the effect on the inhabitants of the strangely shapen year, with its endless winter night, dulling all faculties, and the wonderful short summer, when all life is potentiated, Lie does not wonder that this fairyland produces visionaries, who beyond their normal senses look into worlds hardly dreamt of by others. Tempting as it would be to dwell amid a Nature which has inspired so much of our modern art and literature—with the no lesser romance

[1] *E.g.* The new industrial town of Rjukan.

[2] The Norwegian salt-works near Bergen.

of the gigantic fisheries—we must turn to the interior of Southern Norway, which, during the period of history we are going to treat of, has become of ever greater importance in the intellectual as well as in the economic life of the country.

This part of the land is in the main a broad plateau, cut down deep by long river valleys, generally running North-West to South-East. Right through the middle, where the Romsdal and the Gudbrandsdal back on to one another, the depression stretches from sea to sea. Two rivers flow from the same lake in opposite directions, the *Rauma* to the Northern Ocean, the *Laagen* to the Skagerrack. The great plateau itself is too high to be habitable. It is the grassy, shrub-covered roof of Norway, on to which the flocks are sent to pasture during the short summer season.

The typical Eastland valley is formed by long wooded hillsides, covered mainly by spruce fir and pine, haunt of elk and bear, with sloping farmlands down towards the rushing river, which is often lined by a band of dark forest. The farmers avoid settling in the cold draught along the river, and build their houses on the more sunny hillsides, the moraine soil being also more fertile than the river deposits. The question of geographical orientation becomes naturally important here where so much depends on how the hillside is sheltered from the cold north wind, and how far it is exposed to the sun. The shady north-turned slope of the valley is called the back or wrong side (*baklia*). The points of the compass are cardinal points indeed, and one may hear of North, South, East, and West in all manner of connections.

The valley is often, as in the typical case of *Valdres*, partitioned off by successive transverse moraines, which dam up lakes, and produce rapids and waterfalls. The upper valleys may widen into the fells, offering to view a broad range of snow-covered mountains, the final barrier to cultivation. Through the middle of the landscape flows the river (in the words of Wergeland) like " the clear thought amidst the valley's dreams." The river names are often descriptive. There is the misty *Otta* and the seething, glittering *Sjoa*. There is the pensive *Hûgandi*, which is invaded by the restless *Varpandi*, throwing itself from side to side. The Vikings who went to Russia left this sort of natural names behind them, as *Gjallandi*, the resounding one, of falls in the Dniepr.

In the old times the land was to a far greater extent than now wooded, not only in the lower regions, but up on the fells, where stumps and roots only are now found among the reigning dwarf vegetation. The prehistoric hunter roamed about fairly innocently as far as trees were concerned. But to agricultural man they were mainly a hindrance to be cleared away, and they afterwards had

their revenge on meddling man, when the cold winds unhindered swept over and blasted his fields. Vast quantities of timber were consumed in iron-smelting, and in the last century forest-owners found out that their property could be converted into more current metal. And so the river was set to carry away the woods and grind them into pulp for paper—as "a cheap and efficient substitute for rags." However, the mischief done by short-sighted exploitation is now being repaired by legislation and partly by national management of the woods. To inculcate the importance of this national wealth, the schools have their yearly tree-planting days.

The "Backwoods" of Norway lie towards the East, where they join the extensive forest-land of the North of Sweden, and are continued through Finland into Russia. There is no such natural boundary here as the *Kjølen* mountains farther north, some of the valleys opening out into Sweden. The chief district here is *Østerdalen*, with Norway's longest river, *Glaama*, the great moving timber-road, gliding on more leisurely than the shorter streams, down to the mouth of the Kristiania Fjord. The monotony of the dense dark fir-woods is now and again, over dry and rocky ground, relieved by stretches of the bronzed, open-armed pine tree, and in the autumn the scene is enlivened by the intense colour changes of the leafy trees: the red rowan, the yellow birch, and the aspen playing through all tones from purple to gold. To each farm of a hundred acres of cultivated land will belong a thousand acres or more of woods. Here lives one of the most stalwart races among the Norwegian country population.

In the open valleys of the centre, *Gudbrandsdalen*, *Valdres*, and *Hallingdal*, there is more agriculture—cattle-breeding gradually predominating as one proceeds up the successive rising levels of the valley. Here in the dales is found some of the oldest habitations, and up the valley go every summer pilgrimages from the town in the lowlands. Town children of other countries imagine fantastic voyages into the wide wide world—ours think of the wonderful things they will meet on a journey far, far up the valley—"*langt op i Gudbrandsdala!*"

That which in the inland nature of Norway most strikes the visitor is the largeness and boldness of the lines, together with the subdued clearness of the varied colours, the combined effect of a comparatively low sun and transparent air. In the South the sun chases the colours out, in the North it gently calls the colours forth. The sombre woods and the open, intensely green hillsides, with yellow patches of cornfield, stand out in definite shape, and only the distant mountains are blue-tinged by the atmosphere. Grey wooden farms lie scattered about, occasionally with a white main

building and red-painted barns; the use of colour is not so well understood by our people as by our neighbours in the East. From some open spot the peaceful church looks round on the *bygd* or hamlet from under its blue-grey slated roof and spire. In Bjørnson's thought it stands " on a high place and by itself, inviolable, with the solemnity of graves around it, and the living worship within."

Agriculture here is hard work, but the soil, though scarce, is of good quality and will in time yield good remuneration. The huge heaps of stones along the outskirts of the cultivated fields give one an idea of the toil in breaking up and keeping clear the ground. The moraine boulders are constantly working their way up to the surface, where they have to be dislodged and sledded off. The steepness of the slope is often an obstacle to the introduction of modern mowing and harvesting machines to take the place of the scythe and the sickle. The highest and least tractable parts of the fields are left as natural meadow-land, which with its motley variety of plants and flowers—blue harebells, yellow buttercups, and shining ox-eye daisies—may be more attractive to the eye of townspeople than it is to that of the farmer.

The livelier intercourse between town and country during the last two or three generations has, among other results, added to the peasant's mute intimacy with Nature some of the townsman's Sunday enthusiasm, at the same time sobering the periodic revels of the fugitive townsman through a closer acquaintance with the everyday guises of the great god Pan. The contrast town *versus* country, and the contact between them, count for much in a nation that is two-thirds peasants and fishermen, and which also has, through the towns, so strong an intercourse with the outer world.

Town culture and country culture harmonize less well in Norway than in most countries, and—largely owing to special historical conditions which will be touched on later—there undoubtedly is a good deal of that semi-culture, that lack of style and bearing which goes with an irregular, somewhat jerky, national development. The youth from the land is, as it were, attracted by " the golden nimbus over the night-lit city," and slowly the valleys are being thinned of their population, and more slowly of their local colouring, their language, and their customs. In return they get largely the cheap, flimsy commodities of town civilization, through the agency of the local shopkeeper (*landhandleren*). And so the peasant is gradually becoming less of a smith, a carpenter, and a shoemaker, and hats and bonnets take the place of the comely kerchiefs of the womenfolk. In the style of building the influence of the town is also seen. The old timbered houses which, though often low and narrow, agreed with the natural setting and con-

ditions, are being replaced by high-built dwelling-houses that no longer suit the site, ill-adapted to the needs of the inhabitants, with stuck-on lumbering verandas.

There are, particularly in the South, secluded countrysides where the old customs still prevail. In *Setesdalen* the buildings are solid, with great carved posts and rafters and massive bedsteads, everything low and broad, suggestive of the dwarf with a giant's strength. The men wear huge trousers, as much like an habitation as an article of clothing. An English visitor reports that they " fasten the waistbands of their trousers round their necks, and put their arms out of the pockets." In completion of the picturesque apparel, they wear their waistcoats as a scarf, and on festive occasions a jacket which is just a yoke connecting two sleeves. Peculiar to the dress of the women are the thick, bell-shaped skirts, reaching to the knees, and bright-coloured bodices with silver brooches and pendants.

In these secluded districts a peculiar, elaborate social life has developed. The old song-game is still used, in which two people improvise verses (*stev*) and sing them to one another, each trying to get the better of his (or her) opponent. They have a great store of riddles and rhymes, condensed wisdom or potted wit, for use with every topic that may turn up.

The coexistence in Setesdalen of a developed decorative sense with an extraordinary lack of cleanliness constitutes a problem of folk-psychology. But there is one survival which suggests an explanation : one must not empty any receptacle completely, neither the barn of hay, nor the bin of corn, nor the purse of money, but leave a little as seed for more to grow from. So a little porridge must always be left in the pot. " If you sweep out too much you might sweep out all," and so, for safety's sake, a little rubbish is also left on the floor. Another form of superstition was that, when leaving the *seter* (the mountain dairy) in the autumn, the last contents of the churn were emptied on the threshold for the brownies, to keep them friendly. These subterranean *huldre*-folk were otherwise kept within bounds by a cross tarred over the cow-stable door. Belief in subnatural beings of a semi-human kind survives in several names of natural objects, for instance, plant-names with the prefix *troll*, meaning ogre or giant, generally malignant : *troll-bær* (the poisonous buckthorn), *trollkjærringspytt* (cuckoo-spittle), *troll-nøste* (hard hair-ball found in the stomach of animals). A naughty child is *trollete, i.e.* ogreish or impish.

The annual round of life is deeply marked by the cycle of the seasons. The winter half of the year has the snow to cover things up warm, to provide an excellent basis for communication by

sleigh and ski, and to lighten up the short day and make the earth half-luminous in the night, till the hour when, as Hans E. Kinck describes it, " the winter morning sunlight flows red as fire over the edge of the cold, steel-blue mountains."

One of the chief occupations in winter is work in the woods, felling timber and firewood for the next year, to be sledged home when the bogs are practicable on the first ice, before the snow is too deep. Then too there is time for making and repairing farm implements and the simple, solid furniture. Meanwhile the women may be weaving and in some places doing fancy work, ancient home-industries which are being revived of late.[1] The long winter evenings may be spent round the single lamp and the open fire-place, with work and reading aloud or story-telling and discussion of the latest political news.

The great occasion for social gatherings—besides the usual family events—is Christmas. There are many preparations for the thirteen days of Yule: Yule-killing, Yule-brewing, Yule-baking, what we in one word call *julesjau*, *i.e.* a world to do before the happy day. Invitations are styled to " thee and thy house," and guests, fortunately, may bring contributions in kind, *e.g.* cream-porridge (*rjomegraut*). The long tables are stacked with cheeses, tall and flat, brown and yellow, and in between are piles of the brittle flat-bread and cake, butter, dried mutton, and salted pork. The cups are filled literally to overflowing. At the end of the meal the bowls of cream-porridge appear, and the various *rjomegrautar*, covered with an inch or so of liquid butter, are tasted. After a few spoonfuls one tells the maker of that particular porridge that she has evidently cooked *rjomegraut* before this.

Winter lasts for six or eight months. Then, after a short, turbid spring, when the land has been likened to a giant enjoying his morning tub with the ice-cold water streaming down his limbs, summer lights on our mountain valleys. Midsummer (*Sankthans* or *Jonsok*) is celebrated as summer's coming-of-age, with bonfires lit on the hilltops. The sun has come back, and to stay. The night is almost ruled out, and in the daytime

> " The air is one shimmer of white and blue
> 'tis midsummer sun and midday too!"[2]

And the fox and the hare (to trust the poet) are rushed into an exchange of greetings " o'er the heather"; for " it *is* such a glittering summer's day!"[3]

[1] The Museum at Haslemere, Surrey, contains good examples of Norwegian Peasants' Art.

[2] Welhaven. [3] Björnson.

At this time of the year at least we can feel, with Wergeland :

> "Deep in the dale, our land amain
> has to her bosom caught us ;
> her honest, old, resounding name
> the waterfall has taught us.
> From lofty, sunlit mountain peaks
> the soul of Norway to us speaks,
> and thence its mirrored image seeks
> in hearts of sons and daughters."

Now, when summer is come in and large portions of the gently slanting roof of Norway have become green and habitable, the great moving-out takes place, from the farm in the valley up to the *seter* or dairy-farm among the fells and mountain pastures. All move at the same time, and it is a lively scene, when the sheep and goats and the other cattle, shepherded by the children, proceed up the seter-path. After them follows the rest of the family with the horse and cart, loaded with the chattels—and, perhaps, the old grandmother ensconced among them.

As we rise up the hillside the spruce fir, the regular dalesman, with aspen and rowan intruding, gives way to the Norway pine, which is the better climber. Later in summer we should find among the moss and ling multitudes of blue bilberries and whortleberries and red cranberries, and the bogs would be yellow with juicy cloudberries (*multer*), the most inviting of them all.

The white-stemmed birch is almost the only tree that can stand on the upmost ridge—some 3000 feet high—over which we look into the wide, open region of the fells with its shrubby vegetation of dwarf-birch, juniper, osier, and heather. The typical moor-landscape, fringed by distant peaks, may appear somewhat monotonous ; but it gains by closer acquaintance, revealing ever new features : some cosy nook, inviting pool, or fresh view of the whole.

Scattered about lie groups of seter huts, the goal of the exodus from the valley. Here is the constant summer abode of many of the womenfolk, who tend the cattle and do the dairy-work. And here at least Tacitus's words about the northern barbarians are true : "*Femina dominatur*"—woman rules supreme, amidst her pails and churns and cheese-wrings. On Saturday evenings, when the work is done, and the floor is swept and sprinkled with fragrant juniper, and a bunch of dwarf-birch stuck over the fireplace, visitors may come up from the dale, glad to get a holiday from the strenuous labours of the season.

July and August is haymaking time, and a busy time it is, cattle-breeding occupying such a prominent place in Norwegian farming. Men with scythes are followed by women with rakes ;

or, where the conditions of the ground allow it, a horse-drawn machine may be used for mowing, as for reaping. When the grass is tall and thick it is hung to dry on a kind of open hurdle (*hesje*). The value of the total production of hay is twice that of corn and potatoes together. The most common corn is barley and oats. It is sown in the end of May and generally ripe by the end of August. The sheaves are piled up round poles (*staur*), the ears turned towards the south. Threshing is usually done by horse-power, on larger farms sometimes by water-power, now very often converted into electricity; but from many a farmstead on the hillside may still be heard the slow, steady beat of the flail, as if it had been measuring the time even from the origins of corn-growing.

When the short, intense summer is over, the fells are glorious with all imaginable autumn colours. Now the seter-folk and the cattle, who prefer the sustaining green, are not sorry to go home again to the hamlet. All is done that was to be done, all the dairy-foods prepared, and it only remains to lay on the pack-saddle and lock up the hut for the winter.

The strongly marked character of the returning seasons, especially in the East and inland, together with incalculable catastrophes, such as storm and avalanche, mainly in the West and North, have contributed to produce in the national character a curious composite of fatalism and rationalism. "It was thus ordained" (*det var so laga*) is a common saying. But these people are, if not cheerful, at least *undaunted* fatalists, strong-willed and determined. The unpardonable sin is low spirits. It is put down as a cardinal duty in the ancient Hávamál that "*glaðr ok reifr skyli gumna hverr unz sinn biðr bana*": glad and cheerful every man should be until he meets his end. The Norseman does not willingly let melancholy settle, but airs his heart with laughter. This mirth has little of childlike play and abandonment. His innate purposiveness points to a predominant, tense self-consciousness. Bjørnson knew of no other nation that so much needed to have its emotional life set free.

The Norwegian is satirical and critical. Quoting Emerson's word, "Hitch your wagon to a star," he can hardly forbear amplifying it: "—and you'll wonder where you are." Humour, at least of the Dickensian type, seems to be a product of dense traffic, an endeavour as it were to avoid rub and collision, a kind of buffer; but there is also a keener and less dense mountain variety. Its fun is seldom without a sharp point, turned against somebody; it is one of the channels through which the warlike spirit of old finds an outlet.

Two different types are often noticed and contrasted: the keen, quick, caustic man, like that gaunt and bony Telemark poet Vinje, who treated Bjørnson's *Arne* as a gay joke and Ibsen's *Brand* as a grave one. In Vinje we feel how the usual solid imperturbability is occasionally broken through by that primitive wildness which, particularly during the Union with Denmark, made the Norwegian peasant the grief of the officials of Church and State. An *occasional* breaking through; for, to believe Adam of Bremen (an 11th-century scholar, reputed for his truthfulness): "All that dwell in Norway are the most devout Christians, praiseworthy for temperance, both in food and habits, loving above all things thrift and modesty."[1] The other type is well exemplified by Vinje's comrade in the Landsmaal movement, the mild, good-natured Ivar Aasen. Sure and slow he will come, with no waste of words or energy. In this connection we may note a general tendency to compactness of expression and to letting actions speak. The Norseman is unwilling to commit his thoughts to words, and the words used are compressed with the weight of meaning laid on them. In Bjørnson's *Synnøve Solbakken* the people outside church before the service move about amongst one another, one might almost say, with the telling silence of chessmen. Bjørnson once remarked that abroad "You know a Norwegian as soon as he steps on to the quay. He is not quite sure of himself, and gathers himself up in short, rough, impatient grips (like a parent scolding). The foreigner, on the other hand, is sure and conscious. *His* expression is educated by art. *Our* man also contains it somewhere, but has not acquired the artist's secret of mastery, so he stammers and stutters—or holds his tongue. Then there is the danger of adopting foreign forms and stifling the innate germ. We must grow our own skins. We can no longer afford to fight without our coats of mail, as at Stamford Bridge, where we fell one on top of the other."

There may, however, be hidden in the old-fashioned country-customs a quality of manners which is not easily found elsewhere. An English scientist was crossing a glacier together with a friend and a farmer and his daughter who carried their baggage. On the way the friend, who was unused to the hardships of mountaineering, was very nearly spent. When at last they caught sight of the first welcome habitation, the peasants calmly sat down and proceeded to open their bundles. It was some time before the man of science grasped the meaning: they wanted to improve their appearance before entering a strange house. Far as he had travelled, he had not before met with plain people who showed so much respect for themselves.

[1] It is feared that modern times have somewhat modified this verdict.

One of the Norwegian's besetting sins is certainly that of procrastination, personified by Arne Garborg in the figure of poor *Lars i Lia*, whose barn roof wants mending. "Well," says Lars, "we'll have to see about that." And Lars sees, and sees, about it. When he has had enough of seeing, he starts thinking, and thinks so long that it will have to be put off till next year. Meanwhile he gradually arrives at the conclusion that something must be done, as the hay is rotting and the barn itself threatening to tumble down. After this mental effort he rests for three weeks. When the great day arrives he oversleeps himself, and the following day it rains. At last, when he has got up in time on a fine morning, and had his coffee and his smoke, his wife interposes a bucket that has long needed mending, and while he is actually *at* that, the sheriff and his officers arrive to take steps with a view to recovering the tax, which is overdue. So Lars must off to borrow money for the tax, and—as the harvest-time is on him—the barn will have to wait till afterwards; but if *then* anything should come in the way again—well, then Lars will betake himself to America!

This is unfortunately only one of the manifestations of the great *Bøig*, the clammy viscous being which *Peer Gynt* runs into and is told to go round about—Ibsen's representation of that moral inertia which, like the Midgarth Serpent, girds the earth and lodges a coil with every nation. It appears, allied with the ancient spirit of adventure, in the national propensity for attaining one's ends by other means than by prudent thrift and hardy toil. The popular Norse folk-tale figure Askeladden (*Ashie-pattle*), the Norwegian Aladdin, is lazy and of little consequence at home, but in reality he is more gifted than his industrious elder brothers. He bides his time, and one day confidently sets out and by hap of thought or circumstance performs the feat that no one could do before, and in reward gains the princess and half the kingdom. Another expression of the spirit of adventure is the reckless hardihood and callousness towards pain—not without boast of the deed or hardship—which appeals so strongly to the youth of Norway. These qualities, together with an innate combativeness and sense of justice, may take the exaggerated form of a constant harping on one's right, as in the case of the old peasant who went about with an ancient codex in his hip-pocket always ready to whip it out and have the law on somebody.

In our literary history, again, we see the adventurous spirit spurred by the hard and narrow conditions of the home-land, in the keen desire for going abroad for intellectual booty, as in the case of Ludvig Holberg, of Henrik Wergeland, Bjørnson, Ibsen, Lie, Kielland, Vinje, Garborg, in fact the greater part of the authors

which we are going to deal with. Such as could not get away were apt to develop introspection to a morbid degree. Kristian Elster,[1] like the young Ibsen, affords an example of self-scrutiny and painful self-consciousness, a self-irony that tends to become a corroding diffidence. Jonas Lie well said that the Norwegians' intellectual ribs are too clearly seen. They certainly have more of a hard mentality than of buoyant spirituality. This does not mean that the Norwegians are particularly addicted to close reasoning; perhaps they do not so much link things together as they leap straight at them, by intuitive rather than by discursive methods. Such progression by leaps and bounds looks irregular, but may well be appropriate to the matter, as when in Ruskin's image the bridge piers wade in close succession where the river is shallow, but cross at one stride where it becomes deep.

A general tone of seriousness spreads over the whole of our people and literature. The authors are writing in deadly earnest. Bjørnson is much of an exception with his hearty ringing laughter. When he himself views the Norwegian authors as a fleet putting out to sea, he can find no pleasure-yacht among them. Even that elegant clipper, Kielland, carried two shining steel tubes over the bows, indicating that he was not out for pleasure only.

Other nations present more or less similar qualities in different degrees: self-consciousness, introspection, appetite for the foreign, pugnacity, sense of right and justice, taste for clearness and brevity; but with larger peoples and richer conditions of life these qualities will surely, under the pressure and wear and tear of a more complex civilization, have become more thoroughly fused and welded together. It is eminently a Norwegian characteristic—though more easily felt than demonstrated—that the different elements here exist in a free and mutually independent manner. This suggests an amount of captivating interplay between forces elsewhere in equilibrium, and a consequent picturesque variety, but also the danger of producing disharmony in cultured ears, and leaving the impression of a certain crudeness. Ibsen hints at the lack of continuity in our national character, when *Brand* calls his countrymen vacillating, unreliable—complex fractions, fractions in good as in evil. But Brand will strive to bring about that out of these bits of souls, these formless torsos, these severed heads and hands, there shall come forth something whole, so that the Lord may know His created man again, His own child Adam young and strong.

We like to think that this may be the outcome of all the influences that are at work moulding our national character. Our

[1] 1841–81, author of half a dozen novelettes, of intense feeling and bitter sarcasm, behind Kielland's only in artistic ease.

people are drawn closely together in the sheltering units of the little communities of coast-town and countryside, and, above all, in " the thousand homes." In a cold climate *home* means much, and the idea has extended to the country itself. Wergeland saw the trees cluster together to cover up their mother's shortcomings. In Bjørnson's eagle's-eye vision the land rises blue from the grey-green sea, and it takes its name as in baptism :

" Norge, Norge, blaanende op av det graa-grønne hav ! "

And Vinje, the spirited, two-edged, restless Norseman *must* love that poor, hard-working Mother, wherever he may wander on his wild way. These examples point to what is, together with the pervading spirit of freedom and democracy, one of the best of our national characteristics. But our old word *heim* also embraced the round of *the whole world* ; and that may be taken to imply that the *nordmann,* with all his love for *Gamle Norge,* has no intention to lock himself up in his mountain home and " to himself be enough " ; but that he feels at home everywhere, and wants to exchange his national products—of land and sea and soul—with all other nations.

CHAPTER II

LUDVIG HOLBERG, THE HISTORIAN AND PHILOSOPHER

MODERN Norwegian literature cannot, strictly speaking, be said to begin till the regaining of national independence at the close of the Napoleonic wars, or indeed till some years later. In 1814, after the separation from Denmark, Norway established her autonomy, and succeeded in maintaining it, as well as the free constitution which she had given herself. But the extraordinary development in the 19th century can hardly be understood without some notion of at least the main features of the part played by Norway in the common Dano-Norwegian literature of the preceding period.

The political condition of the country during the four centuries of union with Denmark has without great exaggeration been compared to that of a mastless bark towed by a towering full-rigged ship. Our country had early lost every organ of national motion. The representatives of legal and ecclesiastical authority were sent to us from Denmark, and Danish became the official language. There was no one to lead or inspire any resistance to this denationalizing process. The remnant of Norse aristocracy had been absorbed by the class of hereditary allodial freeholders—the *odelsbønder*—and here smouldered the old spirit of individual independence, always ready to break out sharply against undue interference on the part of officials—a breathing-hole in the wintry covering to prove that the national life was not wholly extinct.

As outposts firmly planted one at the southern extremity of Norway, the other in the far North, we see two sturdy pastors of the Reformation, who wrote of and for the people, and who still live in popular legend. The first, PEDER CLAUSSØN FRIIS, who belongs to the latter half of the 16th century, has given a vigorous description of Southern Norway in those times. His judgment on his compatriots as "a hard, surly, disobedient, self-willed, prodigal, querulous, seditious, vindictive people" (a qualification to that of Adam of Bremen, quoted in the last chapter), is at the same time something of a personal confession from this

stalwart clergyman and magistrate, who may often have found it as hard to rule his own impetuous self as his flock. Typical is his pride in these peasants who attack singly the bear, which possesses ten men's strength and twelve men's wits, armed only with their knives, whereas fifteen foreign men with spears and halberds would have to retire in disgrace. The great work of Peder Claussøn was his translation from the Old Norse of *Heimskringla*, Snorre's Sagas of the Kings. His book, which was printed and reprinted after his death, was for two hundred years the favourite reading of the Norwegian *bonde*, and constituted a valuable link between old and new Norway.

In the second half of the 17th century lived PETTER DASS, the renowned Nordland parson—whose father was a Scottish immigrant, Peter Dundas. The life of the Nordland priest was full of hardship and danger :

> " For Nordland extends along hundreds of miles,
> God's law must be preached among skerries and isles,
> All danger and labour defying.
> Full often it happens that deep under wave
> The preacher must seek on the bottom a grave,
> and close among fishes his eyen."

But, what matter ? Going down at one's post is to be raised with Elijah on the chariot of fire. In his poem, *Nordland's Trompet*, Petter Dass gives a picture of that mountain coastland of the North, and of the daily life and occupations of its people, as vivid and clear as a morning scene in those regions, when the low sun through the transparent air shows up every scar in the weather-worn rocks. On his bold, vigorous verse we feel as in a boat skipping along the waves. In his " Dalesong " (*Dalevise*), full of realism and humour, we look into the homes of the peasants and see how they are doing their best for their visitor—the good wife bringing a large bowl of cream, not without a condiment of flies both large and small. At night the *fell* (sheepskin) comes in. Alas ! its hairs are long and many, and alien cavalry lies in ambush there—" they rode not on saddles, those fellows." Petter Dass is the one writer of this period whose works are read and enjoyed in Norway to this day, and the name and strong personality of the Alstadhaug priest are interwoven with the luxuriant mythology of Nordland. But before his death in 1708, the greatest man of the Dano-Norwegian literature had begun his work.

The first half of the 18th century, the Age of Swift and Pope in the history of English literature, is called the Age of HOLBERG in that of Denmark and Norway. Now and again there have

been heated discussions between Norwegians and Danes over the nationality of this great man. The cause of this difficulty is partly this, that by the Solomonic judgment of History *the mother* has been cleft in twain. We have to try to think and feel back beyond the demarcation line of 1814, when this severing was effected. It was from Norway that Holberg came. It was in Denmark that he produced his work—naturally at the point where it would be most efficacious. By coming out of his *berg* or hill, he became Holberg, and could be the channel through which the influence of the western civilizations was drawn into the land, and the old and broken Danevirke wall against Germany was thus—like the great dykes of Holland—armed with good Norway granite. Even if he had not been such a cosmopolitan mind, Holberg would undoubtedly (together with his Norwegian compatriots) have looked on Denmark-Norway as his fatherland, and he naturally made the common capital of the twin kingdoms, the King's Copenhagen, his home. On one hand he repeatedly places the words *Norvegus* and *Norvagus* beside his name, and refers to the Norwegians as " my own compatriots " ; on the other he protests against that English envoy, Molesworth, who wrote in a book on " Denmark as it was in the year 1692," that " the Norwegians are esteemed by others, and esteem themselves much superior to the Danes whom they call upbraidingly *Jutes*." He also, under the name of Holger the Dane, virulently attacked a Dutch scholar, Burman, for a doubtful compliment to the Danish nation.

From youth to old age Holberg was working very seriously to bring valuable knowledge of history and contemporary thought before the people in the Danish vernacular, and thus make people think. But this sedate activity was interrupted by what he himself called his " poetic raptus," when " Hans Mikkelsen " produced his humorous verse and the famous Holberg Comedy. This is the work by which he is known, and which lives its individual life to-day as strongly as ever. We think of " Father Holberg " somewhat as we think of our old schoolmaster: at times in a humour to joke and very full of fun—times which would be remembered—at other times, however, straight and stern and wise, with a ruler stiffly under his arm at right angles to himself.

The main source of Holberg's biography is the so-called *Letters to an Illustrious Man*, written in Latin at three different periods of his life—when he was forty-two, fifty-one, and fifty-nine years of age—and, besides, the collection of *Epistles* from his last years. They give Holberg's self-portrait, and, it is thought, on the whole faithfully, although the impression gained from his works is a still greater one ; he " builded better than he knew."

It must be noted that these letters about himself are written by a great ironist and comedian. During his period of spontaneous creation, roughly from his thirty-fifth to his fortieth year, he had evolved an irremediable habit of looking at things and men from a comico-satirical angle of vision. With all his protestations of honesty he quite inevitably and half unconsciously misrepresents, if only by digressions, by omissions, by cunning emphasis on what might seem unimportant details. Some investigators, in the first place the Norwegian Holbergian, V. Olsvig, look upon the first of his Latin letters as his most sustained effort in the Socratic manner, regarding it, in fact, merely as a masked apology addressed to the Most Illustrious, or, at least, most highly placed man in the kingdom, at a time when the excessive satirical activity of the University professor had drawn on him a great number of attacks. In any case, it is from these materials that we must try to get an idea of Holberg's youth and surroundings and point of departure, of the travels on which he saw contemporary Europe with his own eyes, and of the aim of all his " moralizing works."

Midway on the steep and rugged west coast of Southern Norway lies the town of *Bergen*, where Ludvig Holberg was born in December 1684, a couple of months before Berkeley, Bach, and Handel. His maternal great-grandfather, Ludvig Munthe, was bishop of Bergen a hundred years earlier, and was noted for his piety, and for the zeal with which he persecuted dances, games, and Lenten mummeries. The bishop's granddaughter married an officer from the Trondheim district, Christen Nilssen Hólberg, who had been a good deal about in the world, and had distinguished himself in Venetian service against the Turks. Shortly after his death in 1686 the Holbergs' house was burnt down in one of the great fires that so frequently ravaged the wood-built coast towns of Norway. However, by thrift and toil the widow succeeded in preserving the rest of their property and in giving her children a fair education.

Holberg once wrote a description of Bergen as it was in his childhood, and it will be worth while glancing at the picture which he draws of his native town. One comes sailing up along the coast, threading one's way in and out between the islands of the *skjærgaard*. One turns round the regular cone of Lyderhorn, the guiding beacon of the fairway, and all at once the town with its red- or blue-tiled roofs, climbing up the mountain-side, lies before one round its deep bay. Behind it the great obtuse pyramid of Ulrikken rises, with driving clouds about it; between showers the sun will shine out and the wet mountain-sides be glittering like silver.

The harbour is a lively and crowded one nowadays. In Holberg's time the masts and rigging must often have been like a wood from shore to shore. The innermost inlet, Vaagen, the Golden Horn of Bergen, was sometimes so full of craft of all sorts and descriptions that it was difficult to make one's way in a boat. Holberg declares that he cannot remember seeing such a crowd on the water except in Rotterdam; and five hundred years earlier the Cardinal William of Sabina, who came to Bergen to represent the Pope at the coronation of King Haakon Haakonsson, in similar words expressed his astonishment at this swarming life in Ultima Thule.

The sides of Vaagen are steep, with wharves all along where ships of deepest draught can moor almost up to the house fronts. Between the moored and anchored-up vessels little ferry-boats dodge about. If you want to go anywhere, says Holberg, you just go to the doorway and call out *Fløtt !* (*i.e.* ferry). And immediately you see the Bergen gondoliers, the *fløttmenn*, racing one another in your direction.

If going along one side of the water, one can easily *walk* (that is, need not go in a Sedan chair), as the whole *Strandgate* (" Strand ") is paved with large flat stones. There is no fear of being splashed over with mud as in the King's Copenhagen, so much less as there are few coaches and no drays, but only sleds on wooden runners. Even in wet and damp weather one can walk dry-foot in the Bergen " Strand," whose stone flags are really, with the great steep roofs, part of the turtle-armour with which the whole of Bergen protects itself against the waters above. For as Holberg, with wonted sobriety, remarks when speaking of the abundant springs of cold, clear water, " As regards rain one gets almost too much of it."

Holberg points to the great national differences between the two sides of the bay. A person was transferred in a few minutes as if from one country to another, from the Norwegian town on the south-western side to the German Tyskebrygge (the former Hanseatic Comptoir) on the north-east, where one finds other people and another language. The German *kontor* had during centuries kept strictly apart from the rest of the town, which it had at times quite dominated.

The higher part of the town on the north and east sides is often so steep that stairs take the place of paths. Broad, open spaces called *almenninger*, commons, run down through the town in different places. They are intended to prevent the spreading of fire from one part to another. In winter they serve as splendid icy slopes for sledging and sliding.

In Holberg's time, as it still is, the fish market with boats swarming alongside was the sonorous centre of the town, a place where the senses are vigorously assailed by shouts and smells and shining scales.

Bergen was a commercial college in itself. Interest in more unworldly things seemed to come only with a decline in its trade. The population is a little nation by itself. It is well known that if you meet abroad one of its inhabitants and ask him whether he is a Norwegian, he will reply, "Eg er fra *Bergen.*" The Bergenser is clearly different from the rest of the Norwegians, by being in every way quicker and livelier and more eager to give himself expression. The town has much more the stamp of its history than any other in Norway, and that history is largely one of trade—trade with the Nordland fishermen as well as with foreigners, many of whom settled there. In Holberg's time, Bergen was altogether the most cosmopolitan town in the Scandinavian countries. "A Noah's Ark of the nations," he calls it. First the English had come in the Middle Ages, then the Germans with their *kontorer*, and, lastly, the Dutch, with whom there was very lively communication, and who have left the deepest marks on the population.[1] No nation, says Holberg, have the Bergen people copied more assiduously than the Dutch, in their diligence and frugality, even in their way of speaking.

An eminently industrious town it was and is. The goodwives stand all day in the shops behind their counters, and wealthy citizens may not uncommonly be seen rolling barrels on the wharf or hoisting their goods to the storehouse, so one must not be offended if one's greeting is not returned, as there is little time here for compliments, or even for noticing other people. Industry and thrift the boy Holberg saw around him on every hand, and these qualities became prominent features in his own character. The blending of private and commercial life, the extension of shop and parlour on to street and wharf, the rapid encounter and snatches of converse across the varied industrial activity of the working day, all tended to develop a lively wit and readiness of repartee.

To judge from the reminiscences of Bergen school teachers, even schoolboys will here be more full of tricks and fun than elsewhere. Ludvig Holberg, who was not a strong boy, would most often be an onlooker of his comrades' games. And so he remained through life—too much captivated by the powerful play going on about him to be himself drawn into it. Holberg was an out-

[1] *Vice versa* one may see in galleries of the Low Countries several "Noorwegsche Landschap met Waterfal."

standing observer of the incalculable gregarious animal man, taking his notes and giving the players the profit of them.

As a theological student (from the University of Copenhagen), he began to work for his living as tutor to the children of prominent people, like the Archdeacon of Voss and the officiating Bishop of Bergen. However, it was not to be Holberg's business to educate children, but nations. He read the vice-bishop's diaries of travel, and these helped to awaken a desire in him to see the world. And the masts, crowded in the harbour like an enchanted forest, drew him irresistibly out to the lands beyond the sea. He turned all his belongings into ready money (60 dollars, equal to £15), and—much to the surprise and disappointment of his relations—joined a ship for Holland, breaking off from Bergen and from his clerical career.

It is not surprising that Holberg's first journey was to the Netherlands, the place of refuge for free minds, coming largely from less liberal countries like the France of Louis XIV. A further expedition he made to the theatre of the European war, then going on in the Rhinelands.

Up to middle age, Holberg travelled widely in Germany, Italy, and France, to a great extent on foot ; but the most important of his sojourns abroad was the two years he spent in England, chiefly in Oxford.

It was a day in April 1706 that young Ludvig Holberg, slender, alert, feminine featured, in company with his friend and fellow-student, Chr. Brix, landed at Gravesend. They had had enough, with four days of water travel, and preferred to *walk* up to London. On their way through Kent the two young Norwegians must surely have been impressed by the fertility and largely cultivated condition of the country. And the road, after what they knew of roads in Norway and Denmark, must in itself have been interesting. Holland, says Holberg, is famous for its art ; but in England one must marvel at the works of Nature, so that whereas Italy is the garden of Southern Europe, so England may be said to be that of the North. He speaks of the complexion of the inhabitants, and shows how it corresponds to the climate ; " for they are neither burnt by the sun nor shrivelled by the cold, so that there are such beautiful people in England as nowhere in Europe." The women are one of the six points which England can boast in what Holberg calls the well-known Latin verse :

" Anglia : Mons, Pons, Fons, Ecclesia, Femina, Lana,"

i.e. " England has mountains, bridges and fountains, churches, women, and wool."

Strangely enough, Holberg has little to say about London, though the volume of the traffic in the great commercial centre of the globe may at least be supposed to have appeared extraordinary to him.

Holberg and Brix soon left London behind them and, still travelling on foot, hurried towards the goal of their journey, the ancient and famous seat of learning—Oxford. Here their first step was to obtain admission to the Bodleian Library. We may still read in the register: LUDOVICUS HOLBERGIUS NORVEGUS, 18th April 1706. Following his principle of not reporting the things that may be taken for granted—*e.g.* that the student who studies gets learned—Holberg makes little mention of his work in the library. He tells us that the two students had soon found it necessary to think less of transcribing manuscripts than of earning their bread. "Chr. Brix was to teach music, and I languages; but he, unfortunately, was no Orpheus, and I no Varro. We therefore obtained but little consolation from these arts, as this is not a people which is content with the outer bark, but is wont to penetrate to the marrow of the matter. . . . England deserves to be named the school for philosophy, for the English are very much given to profound speculations, and cling to them so tenaciously that they will let their reason go sooner than their subject."

For a time Holberg now lived mainly on his share in his friend's hope of a cheque from home. The simple life suited him well, while his comrade grew lean and discontented. When they got the means they lived for a while at an inn, until they learnt that this was against University practice. "There is hardly," he says, "any academy where law and authority have such power, and the students more respect them; where life is more decent, cultured, and devoted (*decentius, cultius, sanctius*)." Regarding the educational system and its results, he remarks that a man coming from a small university like that of Copenhagen cannot help noticing the pressure exerted by a great institution, like the colleges of Oxford, on the individual, forming a certain typical cast of mind, almost like a little nation.

What Holberg says about England is expressed with more than usual warmth and gratitude. He mentions how he was invited to meals by the students, at a time when his name was unknown to them, and he was referred to simply as "Mijnheer." Nowhere did he live more pleasantly (*laute ac genialiter*). Holberg had a pleasant wit, and therefore got on well with a people that were able to appreciate a joke. "I liked the English," he says in his reminiscences, "and they liked me, for I fitted in here." When he left

Oxford at the end of two years the students of Magdalen offered him a considerable *viaticum*, which he was fortunately in a position to decline.

In his *Introduction to European History*, his first historical work, and one product of his labours in the Bodleian, Holberg has a chapter on England, where he dwells at length on the national character of the people. In their love of extremes he finds a point of resemblance with the Norwegians. "The English are either angels or devils, for this people avoids the middle course. . . . This excessive zeal of some and the indifference of others has had the result that nowhere is the religion of peace more lustily fought over than here."

It was the time when Deism was establishing itself in England. As the Danish critic, Georg Brandes, expressively says, "Men smelted the creeds in their crucibles, and on the bottom they found the image of their reason and called it God." Holberg felt akin to Locke's *Christianity not Mysterious*, and would be apt to think with Locke that the senses are our only leaves and root-fibres in the environment, and that otherwise we are fairly well cork-covered and isolated. But he was not of a mind to follow to the extreme free thought which, as he says, in England has produced as many atheists as there are elsewhere hypocrites.

Comparing, as is his wont, nations with one another, Holberg declares that the French break the laws for the sake of gain or revenge, while the English transgress merely to transgress. A Frenchman would say: I should sin if the law allowed it; an Englishman: I would not sin if the law did not forbid it. Once, when putting up at a roadside inn in the Netherlands, Holberg observed how "two Germans demanded all the meat from the kitchen, roast and boiled, to be placed before them. The Frenchmen had a few eggs; but a Spaniard went to the window and took a draught of fresh air."

Speaking of the English language, Holberg relates the story of the Evil One throwing all the languages into a pot and skimming off what became the English. Holberg naturally finds it a rich language, and this circumstance in connection with the aspiring soul of the nation has produced in Milton's poem the greatest epic after Homer. In the drama this people has a strange taste which shocks foreigners. When plays were in vogue with us (this is said at a much later date), we tried to give some English comedies in Danish version. But they did not appeal to the taste of any one; there were good points and wit, but the merry humour which is the soul of comedy was lacking.

It is strange, but nevertheless certain, that Holberg, after

staying in England under Queen Anne in the golden age of English prose, has practically nothing to say on the subject of contemporary English literature apart from historical and scientific works. In his autobiography there is merely a reference to his beloved Addison as the *Spectator*.

When back from his journey in the autumn of 1708, Holberg, in Copenhagen, opened private lectures, to which he got an abundance of listeners ; but when the time came for payment the audience naturally disappeared, and he received no other remuneration for his trouble than that, for some time afterwards, his former pupils raised their hats to him in the street.

In the following year he was admitted to Borch's College in Copenhagen. In this hive of learning, with disputations on futile subjects buzzing around him, he applied himself to more solid studies. A learned jurist allowed him access to his well-stocked library, where he immersed himself in the philosophy of law, especially in the works of the great Dutchman, Hugo Grotius, the originator of the principle of the sovereignty of the people, and of his disciples (like Thomasius and Pufendorff). The outcome of these labours was his *Introduction to the Theory of Natural and International Law* (1713). His intention with this work was not so much to appear as an original author as to make known a new conception of law as based on reason instead of on tradition. We see Holberg emerging as a modern spirit from the formalism in which the so-called learned period had left mind and thought fettered in the North.

He had then already produced the work on which he had started among the bookshelves of the Bodleian, the above-mentioned *Introduction to European History* (1711). This work of one thousand pages was really only the historical part of what had been intended as a universal geography. As a reward for this work, and another one dealing with the history of the late kings of Denmark, which he sent in manuscript to the reigning monarch, Frederick IV., Holberg received the title of Professor Extraordinarius, which meant that he would become a professor of the University when there should be a chair vacant. At the same time, in 1714, he obtained a travelling scholarship, and started on his most extensive journey, to France and Italy. At home he could not afford to live as professorially as he ought to.

In the course of his travels, Holberg on the whole studied men far more than books, but in the Parisian libraries he spent much of his time. Those Holberg students, who are debating the relative importance of English and French influence on Holberg's development, will agree that in England he learnt more from life and in

France more from literature. At the Bibliothèque Mazarin he joined in the race for Bayle's famous Dictionnaire, which he says was the prize for whoever was the strongest outside the door and the swiftest within. The Norwegian professor, O. Skavlan, speaks of " that *instinct* which put Bayle's dictionary in Holberg's way."

Pierre Bayle was the first of the great 18th-century sceptics. He is cold and objective, confronts faith with reason, and leaves to others to draw conclusions. His *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, a forerunner of the *Grande Encyclopédie*, became the armoury from which the later enemies of the Church, like Voltaire, took their weapons. Bayle never disturbed Holberg, who instinctively and calmly (similar to the English also in this) kept faith and thought apart, and was if anything rather amused at what was to others a scandal and a snare. It was the independence of thought which in Bayle, as in Grotius, appealed to him.

It is interesting to note that Holberg came to France before the current of free and practical philosophical thought had begun to flow in from England, and while French literature was still mainly busy on questions of style and was studying the classics of the Grand Siècle. If he had come fifteen or twenty years later, when French literature was becoming impregnated with English philosophy, it is easy to imagine that his attention would have been deflected from the questions of style, which were important to a writer who was going to form a national prose idiom.

In the celebrated quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, now practically over, he was, in spite of his admiration for Boileau and classical form, mainly on the side of the Moderns. They had a manifest advantage when the field of controversy was extended to political and social conditions, an extension which furthered the acceptance of the idea of progress—the idea expressed by Bacon : that the golden age lies before us and not behind.

When he had been in Paris for a year and a half he happened to hear from a French student that one could travel to Rome for twenty dollars. Then all misgivings with regard to his fragile constitution, his small means, robbers and pirates, sweat, dust and heat, were outweighed by the Norseman's love of roaming. He accordingly provided himself with a false passport, drifted down the rapid Rhone, passed through the fairyland of Provence, and arrived at Marseilles. There is almost a touch of nature-feeling in his words here : " The sight of the Mediterranean gave me joy and dispelled my heaviness. I thought I had come to a new world."

He set out by ship for Italy, and came first to Genoa. Here the passengers had to stay ashore while the ship was loading and

unloading. He was much amused by seeing the pious Genoese drummers in the Doge's procession beating their Trinitarian tattoo, once on the drum-skin, once on the wood, and once in the air. In regard to Christian virtues he found the Genoese sadly lacking. For example, his host charged him extra if he rested on his bed in the daytime. And Holberg *needed* to rest, for he had contracted a malignant fever. His illness became serious, and he was left to his gloomy reflections with no one to care for him, and in mortal fear lest monks would be brought in to speed his parting spirit. He was, however, able to rejoin the ship in time. Off the west coast of Italy they luckily escaped pirates, and eventually arrived at Ostia, whence Holberg threaded his way along the serpent-infested road to the Eternal City. Though his fever still clung to him, he crept about in Rome and made the best use he could of the libraries. Most of the books he wanted were on the Index. At times Ancient Rome delighted him and at times Modern. For the sake of the experience he, the Protestant, crawled up the steps of the Scala Santa on his knees, and he also knelt in order to see the Pope. Like the artist whom Diderot speaks of, he was a Catholic when in St. Peter's and took up his Protestantism again at the door.

In his lodgings in Rome, Holberg continued his experiments in economical living. He learnt to prepare his own food—how many Ave Marias must be recited before an egg is done. To gain time, he had pen and ink by his stove ; with the book in one hand and the ladle in the other he probably often had to take the consequences of divided attention.

From Rome he set out for the North, walking as usual, thereby gaining health and saving money. Turin he describes as the most symmetrical and beautiful city that he had ever seen. Crossing the Alps he observed three seasons in a day—summer, winter, and autumn. He rode down the Savoy slope on a mountain sleigh through a region that he found rough and horrid with rocks and precipices, into a country rich in towns and villages.

The following two years Holberg passed in poverty in Copenhagen, waiting for Fate to strike a blow among the professors of the University. At the end of the year 1717 he was even forced to receive aid from the poor-rates. Just then the vacancy came. It was a chair of Metaphysics, and for two years this science was, as he expresses himself, in servitude under him. He had no patience with the kind of philosopher who looks *beyond* the things and does not see the *things*. His idea was that a professor should be mainly an answerer of questions, and he would have the whole course of studies simplified. It was probably during this period

of metaphysical headache that he took to lighter English literature like *Tatlers* and *Spectators* as an antidote. His criticism of the mediæval University programme still in force about 1720 shows English reminiscences: "The immense quantities of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and all sciences which are mixed in the brain, may be likened to that drink which the English call Punch, which consists in a mixture of several ingredients and is intentionally so prepared that one can be quite sure of its effect in making one's head thoroughly muddled."

Brandes is of opinion that it was the great incongruity of the situation—the professor gravely expounding doctrine that he did not believe to equally grave students who understood no word of it—that brought Holberg's comical and satirical faculties out; in other words, that it became too much for his gravity to be both hero and only intelligent spectator of this comedy in black. His vision went out beyond the horizon of the seat of learning to the whole of Danish society. A mock-heroic poem, *Peder Paars* (1719), which he found himself writing in parody of ancient epic poetry and of the excessive admiration bestowed upon it, grew into a satire on all Denmark as he saw it (he is careful to emphasize, "In Norway I was born, no countryman of Paars"), and Denmark was surprised with its portrait in a stirring epic, which contains in germ the characters of the Holberg Comedy. Here are sung to all the classical accompaniment of gods and such-like the adventures of the good huckster, Peder Paars, who, venturing on a voyage across the Great Belt to visit his betrothed, is shipwrecked on the island of Anholt. Anholt is Denmark in miniature, with all the pedantry of the learned, the superstition of the common people, the greediness of the clergy—the whole population "sustaining themselves christianly on wreckage."

No book had ever created such a sensation. Some recognized their own portrait in the rippling mirror; more recognized that of their neighbour—and the latter circumstance no doubt saved the author from public persecution.

Holberg otherwise is not afraid to turn the point of the satire against himself:

"Whene'er I see a chance, I poke some fun at *me*."

He lives a quiet and regular life because his health will not allow him any extravagance—a philosopher when his health is poor, and tired of the world when the world is tired of him. "I find in myself several quite substantial faults on which one could make fine comedies." And in his comedies he again and again holds up to laughter droll shapes which he has himself at some time sloughed

off: *The Fickle-minded One—The Political Tinker—Erasmus Montanus* (the conceited student)—*Jean de France* (the young beau back from Paris).

As to form, the classical spirit then ruling in Europe suited Holberg well: into the well-proportioned classical mould he could easily pass his thought.

> "What makes a happy verse is but a well-formed thought."

His own verse is rather stiffly attired, and we can well believe him when he says that every page of it caused him a racking headache and six pennyworth of coffee.

The poetic period in Father Holberg's life, in which his laughter broke out, when he had come from the larger life in the Western world into the narrow conditions at home, lights up the whole of his work in our eyes. We like him best when his great humour, his natural freshness and force, carry his works beyond the scope of his reflective reasoning thought.

His attempt by laughingly speaking the truth (*ridendo dicere verum*) to remould the people, met with a wide opposition, among others from those who thought it unfit for a University professor to commit comedy; worse, it met with wide indifference. At first the novelty of plays in Danish (instead of German or French) was an attraction. Of the theatre which was started with his comedies he says:

> "The first year which we well a golden age may call
> was spent in constant fear lest our gallery should fall.
> Next year life was precarious, and warily we led it.
> The following winter wearily we dragged along on credit."

The taste was more for tragedy, and it was the fact that Holberg's sad play about a lap-dog, *Melampe*, was understood to be a tragedy that kept the show going. Not even the introduction of dancers could save his stage, and on 27th February 1727 the theatre closed with Holberg's epilogue, *The Funeral of the Danish Comedy*. A couple of years later the bigoted and pietistic rule of Christian VI. provided the tombstone. The strong man, Herr von Eckenberg, and a *petit monstre*, which by permission was exhibited for money, were left in possession of the field.

Brandes aptly sums up the character of the age by describing it as a "wig-time." Peder Paars came as a wind in a frolic, lifted the wigs and brought people's hands instinctively to their heads. The laughter of Holberg's comedy was silenced for the time, but not until it had performed its task of turning Copenhagen out for a good airing.

With special reference to Holberg the comedian, Welhaven writes:

> "To know itself did he wake up his people,
> to see its image clearly in the tide of Time.
> And curiosity and wholesome laughter
> interpreted this saving consciousness.
> Broad human sense and merry wit and humour
> as commentators did he give the day
> and sent them round from house to house: the cool,
> confident couple, Henrik and Pernille!
>
> But that which never can its savour lose,
> for plains of Denmark or for Norway's mountains,
> is just that salt which he so deep infused
> into the mental marrow of the people.
> Inwardly in the race its force lay hidden;
> but he descended down the darkening shaft
> and raised the treasure by sheer strength of mind." [1]

One last journey Holberg yet undertook, a recreation tour to France after his satirical and polemic activity.[2] On his return he settled for good in Copenhagen, and throughout his long life he worked—writing, though a scholar, in the vernacular—to bring knowledge of contemporary thought and international affairs home to the people.

It is difficult to exaggerate the difference in intellectual level at home and abroad about this time, *i.e.* the first half of the 18th century. And, with all his keen sight and native good sense, Holberg could not have raised the inner level as he did, if he had not first gone out to visit foreign lands. There were many Norsemen travelling in those days, but only one who was strong enough to grasp the conditions inside the walls and outside, and, so to speak, carry the Philistine gates away.

As an historian (and author of a series of important works), Holberg, like a true representative of the Age of Reason, laid the main stress on the present, his treatment growing fuller and fuller the nearer the events are. He had no taste for burrowing in the dark chaotic regions of the childhood of the nations. "I for one," he says, "could not make that my chief occupation unless I were

[1] The treatment of Holberg the playwright, by the division of labour between the Scandinavian lecturers in University College, fell to the lecturer in Danish, so that this most important part of Holberg's work is barely touched on here.

[2] Whilst in Paris, the city of his predilection, Holberg tried through a very popular troupe of players to get his own French translation of *The Political Tinker* performed. But the director found it, although *tutta meravigliosa*, too outspoken in the matter of politics.

sentenced to it by the supreme court of justice." He is not, of course, an historian in the 19th-century sense, one who before everything tests his sources scientifically. His reason and clear head often led him to right results by deficient methods. Holberg, in other words, is more rational than critical, a moderate sceptic, who would shake his doubtful matter into a passably solid foundation for his story, but not shake it so much that there might be no ground left for any history at all.

It is as an exponent, a writer of history, that Holberg was a pioneer, in point of time well ahead of Voltaire and Gibbon. He has the faculty of projecting his own keen vision of the movements of the present into the past so as to make that vivid and actual, thus doing a great deal to awaken a more general interest in history. His style has a crispness similar to that of Voltaire's. He relates clearly and lucidly, drawing the main lines in just proportion, never painting. He modestly compares the historian's profession to that of a chimney-sweep: as one sweeps chimneys the other sweeps Church and State. Holberg simply sees and hardly seems to feel.

In his *Description of Denmark and Norway* (1729), Holberg first goes into a thorough discussion of the northern peoples. He has a remarkable comparison between the Norwegian allodial peasant, the *odelsbonde*, a nobleman in miniature, and the Zealand tenant-farmer. " The free ownership of their land gives to the Norwegians an ambition which is useful for the country in times of war. For as most of them believe that they descend from the old Norse aristocracy (not a quite groundless belief), they generally stand up more for their honour than other peasants, and cede the place to no other nation in the world as regards prowess." In another place Holberg, not without national pride, treats the subject of the Norwegian as a naval hero, proving that " Norway is of an altogether different quality from what foreigners fancy, who think that its products consist only of wood and dried fish, whereas I find no land which in comparison to its size has produced so many and competent admirals." So also he read of the old *Hirdskrá* (Rules of the Court) with great pleasure, " as the same can serve to refute those who have pictured Old Norway as a barbaric country." Holberg dwells on Norway's ancient period of greatness and on the new signs of vigour in recent times. He is the first to draw attention to our country's relative economic rise in the 18th century.

Anyhow, Holberg's historical works, and particularly his great *Danmarks Riges Historie* (1732–35), with its bird's-eye résumés at the end of each period, is one of the first attempts to give information, not only about the kings, but of the people's life in the past.

Looking back on his activity as an historian Holberg says, in a Latin epigram which we may here translate :

> " History ! When I history see as being life's mirror,
> Then I wish that I had studied history more.
> But when again I see how the mirror is waved and uncertain,
> Then I wish that I had studied history less."
> (*Hoc studium vellem me coluisse minus.*)

He felt qualified, after forty years of historical study, to say that, even though he had not succeeded in writing any good history, he had at least shown how, given the materials, a good history should be written. He would claim the merit of having introduced taste into the subject, that is, he had rendered it palatable, digestible human mind-food. According to his own dictum, the smallest fragment of history needs a complete man to tell it. Such is Holberg's idea of an historian. His own work, broad and clear, well trimmed like a French garden, with the breath through it of his peculiar humour, forms the best illustration of his idea.

Ludvig Holberg, we see, is a typical representative of the age when men had so recently (with Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Grotius, Descartes, Bayle, and the others) begun to think freely of the things within the bounds of common sense and experience, that they had no inclination to go beyond those bounds into the void. The 18th century was fully occupied in illumining and ranging the finds of rejuvenated science. It has been well likened to a clearing lake through which the current of history passed.

Holberg remained the observer, standing a little aloof from life, in order to see the play so much the better, and wholly undisturbed by any metaphysical curiosity of peeping behind the scenes. He went out to know countries, to know men, and, lastly, to know himself—as far as desirable for practical purposes, a wise moderation being perhaps the principal virtue of his time.

The *Philosophus* that Holberg wanted to be with all his work, whether comedy, satire, history, or moral essay, was simply the man who personified the best culture of the day and popularized it as widely as possible, a philosopher after the manner of Addison or Swift. Holberg, it will be admitted, got on much better with his fellow-mortals than did his reverend contemporary, Dean Swift, for he had learned to take human stupidity as the providential padding of the world-cell on which the patient might in safety vent his rage. He was even thankful that there would always be a residuum of human conceit, as those who think they know everything are most useful to the State with their active resolution.

Holberg's fantastic novel, written in Latin, *Nils Klim's Subterranean Journey* (Leipzig, 1742), was inspired by works like Thomas More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.* However, it has none of "Gulliver's" scathing overlight, the intense but single sight of a one-eyed giant whose vision withers what it sees.

The hero tramps through subterranean kingdoms, corresponding more or less to the nations which the author himself had visited. In the first of them, *Potu,* the Netherlands and England of natural right, the inhabitants are walking trees. Among them those who take it upon themselves to discuss the nature of God have their sap let and are sent to a hospital until they are quite sane again. Another community to which Nils Klim finds himself deported (because of his proposal to exclude women from the government) has a more varied and manlike population. Each citizen is judiciously placed according to his natural gifts: elephants sit in the king's council, chameleons are courtiers, and foxes ambassadors. After his return from his marvellous journey Nils Klim is looked upon by his Bergenese compatriots as a somewhat eccentric individual. But ever and again until his old age the adventurer returns to eye wistfully the opening in his native rock through which as a young man he dropped into that larger world.

Regularity early became the directing principle of Holberg's settled life. We read in his second autobiographical letter: "Nothing is more delightful to me than tranquillity and a systematic regularity in my mode of living. With me everything is system; my business, my leisure, my waking, my sleeping hours, my serious and my trifling pursuits, are all systematically arranged and come round in regular succession."

Some of Holberg's *Epistles,* his last published work, are a continuation of his autobiographical letters and add a final touch to his self-portrait. After he had passed sixty we see him still adhering to the old routine. "I am still to be seen rambling about the town without a bodyguard, and splashed with mud from the carriages which convey persons who were once my equals and who have now become knights and nobles; for titles have so much increased of late that it is easier to find a man with than without one." He is studying as much as can be done in a noisy metropolis. Only spends a couple of hours in the afternoon with friends and on a walk for his health. The rest of the day he divides between literature and music. With advancing years he developed an excessive fastidiousness which prevented him from making many acquaintances. One, he says, annoys me by words, another by gestures, so I come home from most sociable meetings, vexed and in bad spirits, to seek consolation in solitude. As he did not

seem to have the faculty of some great men of becoming precipitous and unapproachable at will, he did the next best thing when pestered by undesirable persons: he ran away. The pen more and more became Holberg's means of communication. This strong mind had little oral charm.

He was in constant combat with those who fulminated against innocent amusements. He would serve God with a gay piety. It seemed to him that what the strict pietists or puritans called the world was really a collective name for what they singly called their neighbour. For himself he only asked that usual exception to the Christian rule of relation to one's neighbour: to be allowed to suspect him cordially of being capable of anything. Like Samuel Butler in a later time, he considered it more immoral to be prey than to be beast of prey.

His money matters were improving through the large sale of his books, and he was able to buy a couple of farms on Zealand. "In town," he says, "I live the life of a philosopher, but when I go into the country I strap on my armour and leave the philosopher at the excise office at the west gate till I return." For the country people at first wished to get the better of the closet philosopher; but when they found him at his post they respected him and left him alone. There were many things to please and encourage Holberg in the country, for, says he, "I hold that there is no more enjoyable and honourable activity for a philosopher than that of agriculture. I love to see the green of the earth appear and ripen and be gathered in, and to see the cows and the sheep go as in a procession morning and evening to their folds. And I never talk with peasants without learning something from them."

He was also pleased to have raised the farms and the farmers, formerly in a miserable condition, into a flourishing one, and to have thus in some measure discharged the duty of a good citizen. In 1747 his properties were made into a barony. He bequeathed by testament his money and books to Sorö Academy for young noblemen, and also some money as a legacy for providing dowries for young girls of moderate means, a touching tribute from the old bachelor.

Early in 1754 Holberg died, sixty-nine years of age.

Some prominent men in after-time, like Grundtvig and Bishop Martensen, have censured Holberg—one for immortalizing a contemporary world of fools, instead of awakening the heroes of old, the other for having nourished and strengthened the natural Danish midway morality as well as the national inclination to pass off anything with a joke.

However, Holberg stands in his place, unaffected by temporary

criticisms, the acknowledged founder of our literature; it has been proved that in his own century out of the eight most widely read books seven were Holberg's, the eighth Snorre's *Sagas of the Kings* in Peder Claussøn's translation. At a time when learning was all in Latin and one spoke "French with the ladies, German to one's dog, and Danish to one's servant," *his* aim was to educate the twin peoples through writing in the vernacular, though knowing well that he forfeited thereby his European fame. This aim he attained, being read and awakening the taste for reading over Denmark and up into the valleys of Norway. The Danish 19th-century philosopher, Rasmus Nielsen, used to prepare his University lectures by reading a page of Holberg and thinking of it on his way to the College; and an old reindeer hunter on the shores of the Norwegian mountain lake, *Gjende*, declared that "many had written well about some single subject, but Holberg had managed everything."

The Norwegian Holberg scholar, Mr. Viljam Olsvig, in an instructive article[1] justly sees Holberg as a unique and solitary figure in our intellectual history. Norway's further contribution to the common literature is, however, large enough to require a separate chapter.

[1] *The American-Scandinavian Review*, January 1920.

CHAPTER III

JOHAN HERMAN WESSEL AND *DET NORSKE SELSKAB*

THE time immediately following Holberg was not a great one in Dano-Norwegian literary history. Thought and taste in the Western countries had deviated somewhat from that which Holberg in his youth had admired, taken up, and taught. When, after the accession of the new King, Frederick v., the theatre in Copenhagen was reopened in 1747, Holberg had resumed writing comedies; but the *festivitas* of the works of his prime was no longer there. The dainty rococo drama came to be the fashion, and made Holberg appear rough and coarse. Later on, an aftermath of the French classical tragedy, with Voltaire and translations of his plays, in its turn came into vogue. Literary interests, lacking original substance, turned towards questions of form. In accordance with the social turn of the time there sprang up literary clubs which were to take care of intellectual life. In 1759, for instance, there was established, after German model, and under the auspices of the Court, a Society for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences (*Selskabet for de skjønne og nyttige Videnskabers Forfremmelse*). The avowed aims of the Society were, among other things, to improve the language, and by prize competitions stimulate young talents to noble emulation. The first competition was a poem on Navigation, and the winner was a young man from Kristiania, CHRISTIAN TULLIN (1728–65). Tullin is one of a little band of Norwegian authors relatively prominent in a not very important period of the common literature, who, following in the wake of Holberg, helped to counterbalance the German influence which had hitherto been preponderant, and to introduce Western ideas, largely from England.

Norway, especially through its trade, was by this time in very lively intercourse with England. It was common for the young men of the commercial class to cross the North Sea to complete their education, and when they came home they brought with them tastes and ideas beyond those of mere business. Tullin had learnt both from the early Nature poets, like James Thomson, and

from Edward Young's reflective *Night Thoughts*. Pope stimulated his taste for a carefully balanced and polished style. He shared both in the rhetoric originating in France and characterizing the first half of the 18th century, and in the philosophical trend which, originating in England, marked its second half. His mind was exceedingly active, and he was always busy with some idea of progress. "Thought is life; wisdom is long life," he wrote. His own life was not long, and he was not enabled to practise much the wisdom that he loved. Tullin was a manufacturer and a merchant, passed through successive official positions, and was forced to join in the extremely sociable life of the times. Besides, he had to serve as a writer of occasional verses for all the town, never having heart to refuse when asked for a birthday poem or a funeral dirge.

The poem which brought Tullin to fame was *The May-Day*, composed on the occasion of a wedding. It is inspired by a feeling of revolt against the manacles of town life, "the melancholy prison, where wishes daily are starved to death, and are reborn to die again; where art and wit are ever concocting plans for new troubles, and where one must live and love, not as oneself but as fashion wills; where health is drunk only to be lost; where virtue is praised only to be tempted." Tullin's *May-Day* exhibits, besides a prominent philosophical Deism, a certain over-elegant stiffness and artificiality, as of one who has too long been pent up in the town culture from which he tries to escape, and is not yet quite at home in the open. But it also has the ring of a new joy, like a town-child's first glimpse of green hilly fields at the end of a long, straight, monotonous street.

The Norwegians were on the whole leading in the common literature after Holberg, and Tullin was the first of them in order of time. His clear reasoned verse and pretty rose-coloured poetry met—and at the same time developed—the taste of the time, and made the author deservedly popular and loudly praised alike by the Danes and by his countrymen. But he was soon to be eclipsed by the intense genius of Denmark's greatest lyrical poet, Johannes Ewald (1743–81), a too early born son of the "age of great feelings." This Danish author must be mentioned here, if only to show the limitations of the Norwegians.

Johannes Ewald is a striking example of maltreated genius, struggling with all kinds of inner and outer difficulties, dragging along an increasingly difficult life. At school his memory was, as he says, stuffed with Bible passages, with Greek and Latin words, and with philosophical sentences, whilst the education of his feelings was left to servants and to chance acquaintance. In

his fifteenth year he ran away from home and from school, and after many adventures went into Prussian military service under the Great Frederick, and next joined the Austrians against him, all in the vain endeavour to gain honour and rank and thereby to win the hand of a girl, who remained the hopeless passion of his life. As a matter of fact, Ewald gained nothing but broken health and a broken heart, besides an inordinate taste for the new German spirit of poetry, which first manifested itself in Klopstock's high-sounding and misty odes.

This Teutonic *Schwung*, soaring to altitudes where it could at last only find expression in interjections, found many admirers and imitators (who exaggerated it into mere caricature) among Danish writers, whereas the Norwegians found it considerably uninviting, except to ridicule ; to them it was all cloud, and they were sceptical as to the presence of any Olympic god within. Neither of the parties could at the time appreciate Ewald's original genius, which was slowly freeing itself from Klopstock's bardic strain.

In his *Death of Balder* Ewald introduced Norse mythology in the blank-verse drama. The illustrations in an old edition of this play, which represent the personages in the plated armour of 15th-century knighthood, err on the side of antiquity, inasmuch as the gods and heroes converse in 18th-century language. The *Death of Balder* has been translated into English by George Borrow. A fair impression of the style of the original may be gained from the following few lines. The opening scene is in a forest among the mountains of Norway, which the gods Balder and Thor are in turn apostrophizing :

" Land whose proud and rocky bosom,
Braves the sky continually ! "

" Where should strength and valour blossom,
Land of rocks, if not in thee ? "

And the final chorus after the tragic end of the demigod is more grandiosely tempestuous in the original even than in Borrow's translation :

" Thunders, burst your cloudy portals !
Heaven, earth, and ocean rave !
Weep and howl, ye gods and mortals
O'er the mighty Balder's grave ! "

Ewald's most fervent admirers, whose enthusiasm was heightened by the poet's long-suffering, formed, as a bodyguard round

his work, a Danish Literary Society. Unfortunately, they only brought into higher relief all Ewald's faults. Compared to the involuntary caricature of their imitation, the satire of the young Norwegians, who disrespectfully applied to *Balder* a term which might be translated " balderdash," appears moderate.

The Norwegians in Copenhagen were more and more feeling and acting like a society of their own within that of the capital. They were partly students at the only university of the kingdoms, partly graduates who were staying on there, looking out for situations—" soliciting," as it was called. Several factors were at work in making the Norwegians conscious of their distinct nationality, both in literature and in the political relations of Norway within the Union. Norway could be proud of the part her soldiers and sailors had played in the wars with Sweden. The history and geography of the country was being cultivated by Norwegian scholars, who in 1760 founded a learned society, shortly to become the Royal Society, at Trondhjem. The land was beginning to be known, and descriptions of the various valleys appeared. The Norwegian peasant, the free and loyal *odelsbonde*, was becoming an object of general admiration. The country was rising in the eyes of its people, and the people itself was being raised by the fact.

There were also other signs of a reawakening of political interest, which had been hibernating throughout the union period. Some Norwegians took an active part in the rather academical discussion of Protection *versus* Free Trade. During the last decades of the century there was also a marked interest in Quesnay's proclamation of agriculture as the chief source of wealth. This doctrine, together with the ideas of Rousseau, was the theoretical basis of the admiration for the *odelsbonde* of which we spoke, and eventually led to the constitution of 1814, placing the political power in the hands of the peasant class.

With the growth of commerce and wealth in Norway, the lack of an institution like a national bank appeared more and more incongruous, but, above all, there rose a claim for a university at Kristiania. When the liberal-minded German, STRUENSEE, was minister (September 1770–January 1772), hopes of such and other reforms were entertained. In 1771 GUNNERUS, Bishop of Trondhjem and one of the founders of the Royal Society, came to Copenhagen to discuss the University question and draft the constitution of a new university; but Struensee's ministry was shortly after upset, and his successor, OVE GULDBERG, proclaimed: " No Norwegian any more; we are all citizens of the Danish state." The Norwegian aspirations were frustrated for the time, and

national energy again found its only outlet in literary and chiefly critical activity.

The director of the theatre at Copenhagen, Nils Krog Bredal, set himself to produce a musical piece, a sort of opera, *Thronfølgen i Sidon* (The Succession in Sidon), which was performed in November 1771. Though not a very significant play, it created considerable stir. The melodrama pleased the larger public; but it was very roughly handled by the new appearing theatrical criticism in the first number of a dramatic journal. The enraged director replied to the criticism *à la* Molière with a polemic epilogue called the *Dramatic Journal*. And when that was played there was a very agitated scene, memorable as the first rebellion of the students against the Court and nobility as the arbiters of taste. There was a regular battle between, on one side, the students, who made bold to hiss, and on the other the army officers, who stood up for the ruling taste, and who in the end threw the disturbers out. The battle passed from the theatre, and spread to the whole town: first in the streets, where the sailors put a hand in, and then for a long time it re-echoed in discussions at the coffee-houses and in the literary societies. The two daily papers were full of prose and verse on the subject, and Ewald wrote from his sick-bed a farce, *The Brutal Applauders*, which was, so far, the only good word in the dispute.

The effects of this commotion had hardly subsided when in February 1772 the tragedy *Zarine* crossed the stage, and met with still greater and more indubitable success. The writer, a young Norwegian, Johan Nordahl Brun, who had accompanied Bishop Gunnerus to Copenhagen as his secretary, was praised up to the skies. At last the pearl of poetry seemed to have been found, and the natural occupation of our writers to be the production of tragedy. It was in reality nothing but a homely imitation of the French tragedies, hardly French in outward form and with no intimation of the French *esprit* throughout its eighteen long monologues. It had all the apparatus with which its model was necessarily provided. The hero and heroine poured their troubles and endless struggles between virtue and passion into the patient ever-open ears of their confidants and confidantes. So also with regard to the three unities of time, place, and action the play was perfect. This perfection of orthodox arrangement, together with the thinness of the material, made this play the most excellent substratum for a parody—and a parody there did come, a most astounding one, which not only overwhelmed with laughter poor *Zarine*, but made importation and imitation of classical tragedy perilous for all futurity.

Kierlighed uden Strømper (Love without Stockings), a tragedy, was written in March 1772, immediately after the production of Brun's *Zarine*, published anonymously in September 1772 and performed in March 1773. The heroes and heroines of this tragedy are not kings and queens, nor Greeks and Romans, but just common people. Their speech, however, is kingly and delivered on stately Alexandrines. With perfect mastery the author has spun the tragic and comic together and balances surely and gracefully on his line ; the beautiful simplicity of the diction surpasses everything in our joint literatures. Northern wit is generally supposed to be more related to boxing than to fencing ; but this is all swift and agile wrist play, with rapid gleams of the point, and a feeling of strength in reserve.

What was work for Holberg is here evidently play ; but if Holberg is difficult to render in a foreign tongue, *Kierlighed uden Strømper*, where the comic effect lies so much more in the outer form, is certainly no easier.

"Thou never wilt be wed if it be not to-day."

Those are the portentous words of the demon in the ear of the heroine Grete, as she is taking her morning nap ; and with this opening line we have at once given the unity of time, inaugurating the tragedy. The unity of action is ensured by centring the whole play around the fact that her lover's, the tailor Johan von Ehrenpreis's, white stockings—*de rigueur* for the wedding—are non-existent. The unity of place is kept throughout, the same room being at one moment Grete's kitchen-parlour, at another the closet where Johan's stout rival, Mads, can give vent to his feelings in fiery monologue. In there he pulls his great chest when he has to examine it, in company with his confidant, Jesper, with regard to a reluctantly suspected theft. Over this spot have to pass, in the course of one fatal day, the events that lead to the tragic end of *Love without Stockings*. All the paraphernalia of true tragedy are there in full order. Grete has her confidante, Mette, as Mads has his Jesper. The tailor hero has none of his own, but a share in each of the others. In truly tragic fashion he is tossed between virtue and fearful temptation : Can he steal his rival's stockings—the only way out of the difficulty ? The action is carried on in the orthodox way by dreams, intuitions, and faintings, with intricate reasoning and high-tuned pathos, the mental strife being interrupted by confidential nudges as to what, as a hero or heroine, one is supposed to do next. Now and again the players relieve their pent-up feelings through the safety-valve of an appropriate *aria*, to which further effect was added by the Italian composer Scalabrini's

theatre-music. Here is a faint echo of Mads's ardent declaration to himself and to Jesper of his feelings towards Grete :

> " On my heart's hearthstone is lighted
> a tempestuous passion's flame.
> At both ends it is ignited,
> and god Cupid lit the same.
> He who sees the smoke uprising
> —for my *aria* is the smoke—
> won't be far wrong in surmising:
> ' That fire there's no need to poke ! ' "

Grete, under the pressure of the double attention of the rivals, and the misgivings which steadily advancing Fate inspires, gets into such a state of utter depression that she cannot even enjoy her pea-soup, which Mette can witness is her favourite dish. At last Fate forces Johan, after proper protestation, and, worse luck, at a moment when Virtue is on top, to steal the pair of white stockings—and from now events speed on to an unheard-of catastrophe, in which *all* the acting persons, one after the other, after passing round the portentous bowl of peas for one last feed, stab themselves. Faithful Jesper, the last to stand on the scene, finishes off the peas, picks up the one common knife and, before following the example of the others, addresses to the surviving spectators the heartfelt wish :

> " May you, when *you're* in love, be never out of stockings ! "

We may now ask, as Copenhagen did, when the piece first appeared in print : " Who is the author ? " The *Critical Journal* remarks in its review that the author " is said to be one Mr. Wessel, a Norwegian." After twelve years in the capital he was not further known.

Johan Herman Wessel was born in 1742 in Vestby, a country parish by the Kristiania Fjord, where his father, Jonas Wessel, was a curate. He descended from one of the many brothers of Norway's great admiral, *Peder Wessel Tordenskjold*. Johan Herman is said to have shown similarities to his renowned grand-uncle, the same strong forehead and bushy meeting eyebrows. He was educated at home till he was sixteen, and after a couple of years at Kristiania Grammar School, passed excellent examinations at the University of Copenhagen and remained there as a kind of *studiosus perpetuus*. Except for a remarkable talent for languages and interest in modern, especially French and English, literature, Wessel displayed no ambition whatever. His evenings were spent at coffee-houses, the night and early hours in the study of æsthetics, and his days less regularly in the teaching of languages. He was of

medium height, with large brown eyes and a frank open look. He walked with a stoop, careless in dress, wearing his own unruly hair instead of the conventional wig—in this respect very different from Holberg, who had the greatest fear of what he called "singularizing." He was quiet and reserved, except when with his friends, developing melancholy and misanthropy in his later years. His unsettledness and total lack of aims left him in a state of chronic poverty. Though a critic who for natural good sense and judgment has been compared with his great contemporary Lessing, he was too indolent for any regular work of criticism. It came from him spontaneously in merry, sociable talk, and in that one genial parody, *Love without Stockings*. As in the epitaph he wrote on himself:

> "He ate and drank, in spirits low,
> and downright down at heels.
> He never felt like work, and now
> no more like living feels."

Europe was now teeming with new ideas. The time was one of eager discussion: it was the age of clubs and coffee-houses, of Dr. Johnson's sway in England. The young Norwegians in Copenhagen, students and graduates, gathered at *Madame Juell's Café* in Sværtegade, just as the Danes did at Madame Neergaard's in Badstustræde. The object at first was merely social—that is, to spend the evening together as good Norwegian brethren; but by and by their meetings acquired a distinctly literary tone. Eventually the Norwegian Society—*Det Norske Selskab*—was founded, in April 1772, by the energetic Ove Gierløv Meyer, who was Wessel's old schoolmate from Kristiania.

Their motherly, good-natured hostess, Madame Juell, let them have a room upstairs where they were undisturbed by chance visitors. She had a good influence on the wildest elements among these young men, whom she considered all as her children, and every birthday she received complimentary verses from them. One of their institutions was the verse-competition for the prize of a steaming bowl of "bishop" (double punch)—"archbishop," judging by the size of the bowl—to which every member had contributed a small coin. As the character of the gatherings became more literary, this prize was replaced by a signet ring bearing the Horatian encouragement to study the classics by day and by night (vos exemplaria græca). The book kept for these impromptus has unfortunately been lost. And so have the more regular publications which were issued after the Society had, in 1774, been reconstructed by the founder on a purely literary basis. The three volumes, with other of the Society's papers, were, years after, lost at sea, when they were being transferred to Norway.

We may briefly introduce a few of the prominent active members of *Det Norske Selskab*. J. N. Brun we have already met as the author of *Zarine*. It is not likely that he would have got on well in the long run with the author of *Love without Stockings*. As it was, he shortly returned to Norway, but not until he had, over the cups, among his Norwegian brethren in Copenhagen, composed our first national song: "For Norway, giants' native land" (*For Norge, Kiæmpers Fødeland*).—O. G. Meyer, the founder of the Society, formed an ever-patient target for the wits he attracted there.—Johan Vibe, secretary to the prime minister, Guldberg, was also the secretary of the Society, and one of the best song-writers of the whole company. His brother, Joachim Vibe, lieutenant, was a rough fellow, more malicious than witty. Madame Juell called Johan V., by way of distinction, "Decent Vibe."—Søren Monrad ("Søren Latiner") was the Dr. Johnson of the Society, a ponderous stylist, bitter and sarcastic.—Claus Fasting was, after Wessel, the greatest talent and the most cultivated personage of the Society, Voltairean, French to the tips of his fingers, or, as Wessel put it, "French in mid-inebriation." As an example of the improvisations in the Journal, here is rendered Fasting's praise of simplicity:

"Simplicity is good
in drink and food
—and clothes:
who naked goes,
him can—oh, lucky one!—
no tailor dun."

—Bendix Diurhus Prahl, the author of an account of the contemporary state of the Nicobar Islands with an autobiographical introduction, was a very original, Pickwickian type, and like Meyer a constant recipient of the overflowing wit of the evening.—Caspar Wessel, a surveyor, was a very popular member; but the life and soul of the Society was his brother, Johan Herman Wessel, with his ever-ready friendly wit, his clear, cultured mind, and quiet, unerring judgment. His unassuming, but indisputable, superiority made him the natural centre round which the circle turned.

The Norwegian Society was Wessel's home. It was the soil in which his talent lived and grew, and he enriched and vitalized it in return. Through it his vigorous common sense and discerning criticism permeated to the wider Danish society and in time to his native Norway. No one could be annoyed with Wessel's fun. Holberg gave stinging blows, but Wessel turned one upside down, and set one on one's feet again so smartly that one did not know exactly what had happened. He was the indefatigable jester of the

Society—a trifler, maybe, but a splendid one. As he wrote underneath his portrait :

> " This man seemed born for bagatelles,
> nor did he ever do much else."

His wit lived after him in Copenhagen, and may be at least in part responsible for that excessive tendency to trifling with which the Danes are sometimes charged.

The action of the Norwegian Society has been the important though mainly negative one of pricking, as they appeared in literature, all bubbles of sentimentality and affectation. It had little acquaintance and less sympathy with the new rise in German poetry, and judged of it only by its discordant echoes in the homely Danish. It is unfortunate that it could not but direct its fun against Ewald—the soul of whose seraphic language few of its members could in the least comprehend—rather than against his imitators. In the presence of this lyric genius their force, which was all for clearness and *justesse* of expression, became their foible. However, the antagonism between the Norwegian and Danish Societies may not have been quite so strong as the echoes seem to suggest. They contributed to one another's critical journals and gave notices of one another's productions. The Danes could hardly have any grudge against Wessel. On the other hand he, and at least also Fasting, had a certain recognition for Ewald, however much the pathos of the Danish bard drew out the Norseman's satire. There were, of course, rough elements among the Norwegians; the sensitive Edvard Storm, our first poet of mountain life, a fervent admirer of Ewald, kept aloof from *Det Norske Selskab.*

Wessel's further dramatic productions, one or two comedies which he pulled himself together to write, hardly count. Of the better one, *Lykken bedre end Forstanden,* we cannot admit the intimation of the title that the luck was better than the wits. Two serious productions of his are respectable specimens of 18th-century didactic poetry.

From 1776 to 1778 Wessel suffered from a painful disease which broke down his strength and nearly quenched his spirits. In the following time he succumbed more and more to the habit of drink, and developed a deep melancholy and indifference with regard to life, and an increased loathing for all activity. After he had in 1779 in vain applied for a situation as controller of Customs at Kristiania, a Bergen man, Bredal's successor as director of the Danish stage, gave him a small post as translator at the theatre. Encouraged by the prospects of a regular income, Wessel married a

Norwegian girl without means. He seems to have expected to get a nurse, and she to be provided for by marrying the well-known writer ; they were both mistaken.

Though generally depressed and silent he would, when stimulated by a visit or over a friendly cup, be reanimated and throw his improvisations liberally about. Eventually he began to edit a humorous weekly, *Votre Serviteur* (*Otiosis*—For Idlers). But this was too plainly wit coined out for cash—mostly adaptations from English and other foreign authors. Manuscript did not flow freely in, and though *Votre Serviteur* craned its letters and strained its lines, the reader was often cut off with some such valedictory advice :

> " When you are tired of rhyming, then,
> Rhymer, like me put down the pen ! "

This Idler journal contains some of Wessel's genial trifles, versified stories which are to this day a relieving feature in the Norwegian schoolboy's curriculum of literature. In *The Fork*—an imitation of Matthew Prior's *The Ladle*—Jupiter and Mercury visiting the earth find everything in such excellent order

> " that Jupiter exclaims
> —these were his very words :
> ' Pope has but told the truth,
> this is the best of earths.' "

Here also is found his jovial song, *Good and Ill in Every Nation*, at the end of which he praises the " *brave Nordmand* " for his love of his native land, warning him at the same time against the belief that there live men and women only in England and there.

Wessel has been compared as a stylist to the French fabulist, La Fontaine, with whom he certainly had in common indolence, volatility, and other temperamental qualities. But Wessel produced a form of his own for his peculiar *vis comica*. He throws his clever verse into everyday language ; it does not sing, it talks. Wessel is a constant improviser, while La Fontaine was always the careful artist. La Fontaine treats the moral of his fable with apparent gravity ; he is a moralist and accepted as good reading for the young. Wessel invariably treats the whole thing as exquisite nonsense, and only tags on a moral to dispose of any lingering suspicion of moral intent. In the story of *The Smith and the Baker*, the village blacksmith has killed the tailor, for which crime an old baker is hanged in his stead, considering that the village has two bakers and only one blacksmith. Moral :

> " For death be constantly prepared : it may
> be lurking where you think it miles away."

Wessel reflected, with his fun, Holberg's more indignant scorn of all asceticism—the renouncement of being human, in order to escape from, rather than master, the human passions. We may, perhaps, be touching something deeply Norwegian underlying both men's view of what the elder one termed the " undefinable animal " by defining it for them :

" Man, tragic skeleton ! Alway afresh
appearing in the comedy of flesh ! "

In his last verses, written a few months before his death, Wessel lowers his flag and gracefully hands over his mantle to the young Dane Jens Baggesen, who had just published a collection of comical tales ; Baggesen in his turn declared that he had married Wessel's Muse when she became a widow.

After a short illness, during which his spirits revived again, Wessel died at the end of the year 1785. There was no great demonstration as when Ewald died four years before and all Denmark suddenly understood their loss and ingratitude, so that his funeral became a national demonstration. Ewald had been growing and was cut off—Wessel had mellowed and dropped off. Ewald is a romanticist, too early born, a messenger of the age of great feelings arrived on a still cold earth. Without any comparison between these two incommensurable quantities, it may be said that Ewald's greatness suffered by the fact that he appeared out of season, while Wessel's was enhanced by the circumstance that he came so exactly at the right time.

In the period now following, increased commercial activity and awakening political thought in Norway in their different ways eclipsed literary interests. The old members of the Norwegian Society of the time of Wessel gradually returned as parsons and magistrates to their native country, where they did important work in the cause of popular education. Johan Nordahl Brun, the writer of the above-mentioned toast to Norway and of a play, *Einar Tambeskielver*—too patriotically Norwegian to be performed in Guldberg's Copenhagen—eventually became bishop of Bergen. In this last representative of Norway in the union period there is much to remind us of Peder Claussøn Friis and Petter Dass—the same strong, confident, healthy type, the powerful, commanding personality. His songs from the end of the century are a perfect expression of the general feeling of contentment with the flourishing times of the " Armed Neutrality." [1] His ditties are still

[1] During the American and European wars of this time, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia maintained and almost monopolized the trade with the various belligerent countries, sending their merchant ships in strongly armed convoys to establish the principle that " a free ship makes a free cargo."

amusing because they so genially reflect the self-satisfied feeling of comfort and welfare, following in the wake of material industry: to be sitting safe on one's grassy hummock, drinking one's wine and paying off liberally. Material welfare for the time acted as a lightning conductor for national separatistic energies. MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, in her *Letters written during a Short Residence in Norway*, expresses her wonder that the people "sing at present, with great glee, many Republican songs, yet they appear very much attached to their prince royal."

Together with the worthy Bergen bishop must be mentioned two other figures from this transition period. CLAUS FRIMANN (1746–1829), like Nordahl Brun, returned from a literary life in Copenhagen to a clerical living in Norway. He became a country parson in a western fjord district and attached himself, with patriarchal feelings, to his flock. He writes for the freehold farmers who need not fear the bailiff's whip and proudly sing:

> "I roll off stones with merry cheer;
> the ground is mine I thereby clear."

EDVARD STORM (1749–94), the son of a parson in Gudbrandsdal, as a young man wrote songs (*Dølevisor*) in his native Vaage dialect, painting with remarkably fresh and true colours the life of the peasants in the dale and in the mountains. The latter half of his life he spent in Denmark in quiet seclusion. This unassuming Norseman kept away, as said before, from the boisterous meetings of the Norwegian Society. As a schoolmaster he was much loved by his pupils, including the famous Adam Oehlenschläger. Storm's fame rests, besides on his *Dølevisor*, on his *Sinclair Ballad*, which in a truly popular vein commemorates an incident in national history—the awful end of a mercenary band of Scots on their way to join the Swedes. The following is an attempt at rendering two of his popular songs:

UP TO THE SETER [1]

> "Fields grow green, leaves are unfolding,
> melts the snow from bare hills now,
> cowslips bloom through all the valley,
> golden sweet for hungry cow.
> All that lives is out and stirring,
> from his lair does bruin creep,
> merrily skip from the stable
> calf and cow and lamb and sheep.

[1] Translated with the kind assistance of Miss Olive Edmonds.

Sunshine warm upon the hillside
puts the lurking frost to rout;
haze has come into the weather,
plough and harrow are brought out.
Boys are hard at work fence-mending,
meadows must be cleared,—and so
to the dairymaid 'tis clear that
cattle must to seter go.

Come then, sheep, come goats, all of you!
Come and follow me with heed!
To the fresh green mountain pastures
I my cows and calves will lead.
There we shall live free from danger,—
Svein, our dog, keeps off the bear;
I will blow my horn, and then he'll
never venture to come near."

HOME FROM THE SETER [1]

"We have done our task of summer,
gathered cheese and butter store,
only now to pack the saddle,
and to lock the seter door.
There is no more food remaining,
so we journey down the hill.
Glad are we to be returning,
and the cows are gladder still.

Farewell, meadow, where so often
on the soft grass strewn with flowers
I would stretch my tired body
in the weary noonday hours!
Farewell, cottage, dear old cottage,
that my daily work did see;
how I wonder if you ever
saw who came to visit me.

Come, then, hasten from the seter,
come and follow down the path!
Home fields now are open to you,
yours is all the aftermath.
Hurry! for at home they're waiting;
they, too, seter food would taste.
Here we must no longer tarry,
folk and cattle, homeward haste!"

It was not until the beginning of the new century that the trials of war, following on the period of prosperity, brought out the spirit of the Norwegian nation, and that—as Professor J. E. Sars says—the patriotism from the times of clubs and drinking-songs

[1] Translated with the kind assistance of Miss Olive Edmonds.

appeared with a more developed and manly character. The French Revolution had taught our nation to think, the straits into which the country had come forced it to act. The people had been divided into, on the one hand, a small educated class living in, or with its eyes turned towards, Copenhagen, the common capital, and, on the other, the peasants at home, whom these intellectual people admired poetically at a distance, as they did the much-sung mountain fastnesses of Norway. The year 1814 united the parts in one great moment. The spiritual energy of the nation, when Norway by the Napoleonic wars was cut off from Denmark and from European intercourse generally, concentrated on the creation of its Constitution (*Grundloven*), which, modelled on that of France of 1791 and inspired by British liberal institutions, became the most liberal and democratic of Europe. Thus principles which were elsewhere wrecked in revolution and war, were in Norway quietly and deliberately put into action.

It will be understood, however, that the Norwegian freedom, which was so suddenly brought to the light by the sword of war, had gone through a long period of gestation, by the Norwegians' activity within the common intellectual life of the two countries, as well as by the faithful preservation and gradual accumulation of national values, which had been steadily carried on by the Norwegian peasant in the homeland.

It may hold good for nations as for individuals that

> "Fearless and faithful futureward look,—
> such is the glittering wand,
> that which determines
> Fate's every footstep." [1]

So much of energy in the first years after 1814 went simply to recovering after the war and the British blockade, and to finding and feeling one's limbs again as an independent state after a political torpor of centuries, that little was left for any other purpose. National literature passed off into patriotic praise of the new freedom, more enthusiastic than artistic. The time that was the "Golden" Age in Danish literature was the "dross" age in Norwegian. Against names like Oehlenschläger and Grundtvig we can only put up such as Maurits Hansen and Bjerregaard, both of whom, however, enjoyed great popularity in their day.

Maurits Hansen (1794–1842) was an extremely precocious youth, and with his Poems (1815–16) found himself the celebrity of Kristiania, the young capital. He married young and started

[1] Henrik Wergeland, *Digterværker* (ed. Hartvig Lassen, Kbh., 1886), vol. i. p. 7, to which edition reference is made in the following chapter.

a lifelong struggle for existence, as a schoolmaster, at Kristiania, Trondhjem, and Kongsberg. He was an extraordinary worker. After his long day at school he managed to write a variety of school books, dictionaries, "letter-writers," and guides to this and that, edited weekly papers and children's magazines—and was with all that the most versatile and prolific novelist that has appeared in our country. He wrote in every sort of style—delicate idylls of country life, and intimate descriptions of the more prosaic bourgeois life of the small town which he knew so well; he turned out high-flown romances of knighthood and robberhood in the manner of Goethe, Schiller, and Tieck—exciting and exotic stories full of intricate plots and knots which the author did not always remember to unravel. His indubitable power of producing self-delineating characters and his gift of easy-flowing dialogue are, unfortunately, swamped in this mass-production. A good deal of interesting history of the daily life and manners of the time may still be drawn from Maurits Hansen's books. At a time when the output of books was at a low ebb he supplied reading matter able to keep literary interest alive. By his subjects and manner of treatment Maurits Hansen is our first romanticist; but his work was neither original nor national enough to give Romanticism a foothold in Norwegian literature.

Henrik Anker Bjerregaard (1792–1842) still lives in his national song, *Sønner av Norge*, which distinguishes itself among the contemporary crowd of patriotic songs known as the *syttende-maipoesi*, and also as the author of the amusing comedy *Fjeld-eventyret* (An Adventure in the Mountains, 1825), our earliest play with a modern national subject, which is to this day performed and enjoyed. The subject is the adventure of some students on a walking tour. The central figure is the sheriff, Lensmand Østmo, who has understood his position, intermediate between the people and the higher officials, so well as to be able to command both sides. He has naturally slipped into influence over the judge, the parson, the doctor, and the rest of the parish notables. He is very well aware of his own importance, and is himself the best illustration of his liberally dispensed maxim:

> "Yes, in this world one needs must know
> to thread one's way 'mongst high and low."

The music of Waldemar Thrane goes exceedingly well with the play. In lyrical intermezzos like *Aagot's Fjeldsang*, author and composer have together happily struck the true note of the Norwegian folk-song.

In his last years Bjerregaard, often supercilious and irritable,

felt out of harmony with the now oncoming times of the descent of poetry to the stage of everyday public life, and looked wistfully back to the times gone by.

In the words of Mr. Edmund Gosse, this first period of the 19th century in Norway is but "the ridge of light-blown sand over which the traveller has to toil from his boat till he reaches the meadows and heathery moorlands beyond." But, as Mr. Gosse goes on, "we now come to a poet whose genius, slowly developing out of the chaotic elements around it, took form, and colour, and majesty, till it lifted its possessor to a level with the noblest spirits of his time."

CHAPTER IV

HENRIK WERGELAND

HENRIK ARNOLD WERGELAND was born at Kristiansand, on the south coast of Norway, the 17th June 1808.[1] His father, Nikolai Wergeland, then a teacher at the grammar school, descended from a peasant family of the western fjords; his mother, the lovely and lovable Alette Thaulow, united a Danish and a Scottish ancestry. Nikolai Wergeland, a distinguished author and savant, was one of the most active members of the National Assembly at Eidsvoll in 1814. Three years later he was appointed vicar of Eidsvoll. A worthy disciple of Rousseau, this rationalistic clergyman took a keen interest in the education of his children, and particularly in the development of the extraordinary faculties of his eldest son Henrik. Henrik throughout his life loved and revered his father, in whom he found the most intelligent defender of his literary production, while his heart wholly and in more direct sympathy went out to his mother.

The hills and dells around Eidsvoll, the historical place inspiring reverence for country and Constitution, made a glorious playground for venturesome children. Henrik grew up a sound soul in a sound body, strong and hardy, a lover of outdoor life, and with a gleam in his eyes which was early noticed by his parents. Eleven years old he was sent to school at Kristiania. History was from the first his favourite subject, later on also botany. Soon he was making his first attempts as an author. At the age of thirteen there appeared in *Morgenbladet* a short romantic tale, *Blodstenen* (The Blood Stone), signed W——g; Wergeland in later years had, as he has himself related, the honour of seeing it entered in a reader with signature in full—Washington Irving!

During the following years of theological study Wergeland lived by turns at Eidsvoll and in the town, and produced a growing alarm in home circles by his full participation in the wild student's life of the times, with revels, brawls, scuffles with the police, and mischief generally. Being the best of comrades and "higher than

[1] The present chapter is largely drawn from a privately printed booklet of translations from H. W.

any of the people from his shoulders and upward," he became quite naturally the leader of the students' corporation, which then played a part in the life of the young capital.

In 1827 Wergeland met with Shakespeare, who, if he did not open his eyes, at least (through the medium of Foersom's Danish translation) loosened his tongue. "Nothing else satisfies me now," he declared, and the desire for expression of what had awakened in him made him, the "sky-breather," wish to lock himself up, Balzac-wise, in a black little attic, and live as in an inkhorn. Anyhow, during the next eighteen years (the second half of his life-time) there flowed from his pen plays, poems, articles, magazines for the people, works treating of the most varied departments of life.

In the play *Irreparabile Tempus* (1828),[1] he touches on the different attitudes toward Life, in a way that is surprising in a youth of twenty years:

> ". . . Now, some are lying still
> And sleeping all the time, rending the darkness
> Only with yawns—like to the sleeper saints—
> Till down the roof comes by itself, and they
> Must swallow half the final snore and come,
> Rubbing their stupid, blinking eyes, into
> The fresh air blowing just beyond the wall.
> They are the lazy ones. But others run
> About and madly scratch with tooth and claw
> The murky wall on every side, until
> It crumbles, creaks, and lets in the fierce sunshine
> That scorches them like withered grass: their force
> Was spent, instead of gradually growing."

However, the drama was not the form of art best suited to Wergeland's genius. As the world grew on his opening sense, the great uniting lines overshadowed the details and the tension of the elements that produce the powerful play. To him mankind, a living, changing being, and part of a larger one, is more actually Man than the individual is. He lived too intensely in the world of the ideal to become a careful delineator of character, and his men and women (angels and demons more often) are all poets linked to everyday reality in most incongruous attitudes. Wergeland is nothing if not lyrical and—at the outset at least—anything but critical. His maturest play is *Venetiancrne* (The Venetians), 1841, a drama of friendship and love.

On his death-bed Wergeland admitted that he never succeeded in mastering his vanity. Probably—as with Thoreau, though for different reasons—more loved him than liked him. Taking *his*

[1] *Digterværker* (ed. Lassen), vol. iv. A complete edition in 23 vols. is being produced by H. Jæger and D. A. Seip, Steenske Forlag, Kristiania, 1919.

arm was to be raised on it. There is a story of his rushing up to a new acquaintance and firing off the question, point-blank: "Will you be my friend?"—"Yes, thank you—at a distance." His genial openness and exuberant cordiality rather repelled than attracted his individualistic countrymen. Rock and tundra must be shy of such luxuriant growth; as when Henrik Wergeland greets "Sylvan, a Botanist," with a song recalling the first time they met "on the border between life and death," a last streak of snow like a fleeting pallor on the meadow . . .

> "Of the blue ice a passing sheen,
> when to the first faint smile of green
> a lark poured down its song . . ."

Then come the colt's-foot, the coy anemone, and the march-violet oping its heavens—till from the dark depths of the earth its fire sparks out in dandelion and ranunculus.

> "If on thy bosom cold, O Earth,
> such glory we may see,
> then, Sylvan, surely fairer birth
> from ours in blossom shall call forth
> the Spirit's 'Let there be!'"[1]

The years 1827–29 mark the most intensely formative period in our poet's life, the time of the unfolding of his genius. Alongside of his straggling theological studies he assimilated the ideas of the great writers of the 18th century, together with the early songs of liberty and dawning philosophy of evolution of the 19th. Byron for a long time gripped and overshadowed his soul like a bird of prey, which he shook off at last in a storm at sea.[2]

Wergeland's greatest work was now forming within him, the world-poem to which his life was to be the commentary, and which he recast on his death-bed, in order that men should understand his message. The force welding together all the heterogeneous materials was the youthful poet's passion for a maiden "fair and radiant"—an unrequited passion. The desire to appear with all his being before the loved one, and the rejection of his love, so to speak, into the whole universe, brought forth the poem of *Creation, Man and the Messiah.*

Skabelsen, Mennesket og Messias, a work of 720 pages, was written off during the year 1829, the year in which he passed his examination in theology, and published in 1830. "A grand poetic overture to the July Revolution," says a discerning and sympathetic

[1] From *Til Sylvan* (1834), vol. i. p. 139.

[2] Wergeland's relations to Byron (and Lamartine) are the subject of an interesting article by Professor Chr. Collin in *Atlantis*, Kria., of January 1919.

Danish critic, H. Schwanenflügel; and he adds, with regard to the revised edition, *Mennesket* (Man) of 1845 :[1] "It is available for any one who is not altogether unpoetical, and whose soul is not totally deaf to the supreme problems of life."[2]

In giving a few traits of this poem or prophecy we shall employ the second edition, *Man*.

The author retains, in a revised form, the foreword to *Creation*, "because it holds the key to the genesis of the poem—the statement of the connection between the young poet's platonic love and the resolve to write down a work like the following, cut short by the sense of his being overwhelmed by his subject, by 'the All invading him.'"

His love rejected, he will sing *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth*. We can only quote the last few of these lines :

TO AN ILLUSTRIOUS POET.[3]

"Oh! daring design! . . . I tremble.
All Nature has heard it.
Rustling the birch to the lake gave it,
rushing the lake to the shore rolls it.
Thund'ring the All breaks upon me:
'See, Poet! Am I not Love, Love alone?
Forget not the stars! Forget not the flower!
Forget not the worm in the dust!'

And the stars, one by one, are approaching,
like full, shining sails;
beasts break out from the forest,
hemming me in with kind looks;
rises the snake in the heather,
proud as a king who his kingdom is viewing;
the flowers, their hearts to disclose, are
opening all.
All wants to be sung in the Love-poem,
all there is being nothing but Love.

Anguish! anguish! I am o'erwhelmed
by heavenly visions and greatness of worlds,
by the motley whirl of the living.
Myriad-voiced the All rushes on me,
confuses with thick-crowding visions—
that I, who should in the midst of its zenith
sit like immovable eye, solitary,
am whirl'd on myself, like a mote among motes. . . ."

[1] Vol. iii.

[2] *Henrik Wergeland, en literærhistorisk skitse*, p. 278.

[3] Namely, Henrik Steffens, to whom (with other champions of truth and freedom) the poem was dedicated. The great lake *Mjösen*, with its fair island *Helgö* and the broad, fruitful districts of *Hedemarken*, stretches northwards from a few miles north of Eidsvoll. *Mt. Skreia*, on the south-west shore of the lake is, so to speak, the mid-air starting-point of Wergeland's poetry.

In the opening scene Phun-Abiriel, a vigorous sceptical spirit, and Ohebiel, a loving spirit, hover over the steaming planet. They continue their intercourse from some other globe of matter, Ohebiel exhorting to

> " kneel and adore in God's fresh, reeking footprints,"

Abiriel refusing to worship what he cannot grasp with his understanding. Ohebiel will not desert the doubter :

> " And still, unhappy spirit, shall my love,
> ever accompanying, thy doubt illumine,—
> a torch that boldly penetrates the dark,
> pierces with forging flame the heart of midnight."

With a brush truly " dipt in the sun " the drama of creation is unfolded, till the acme of organic evolution is reached in the first semi-human pair. " In sleep 'neath the oak tree the spirit with dust is united, and staid in its blood-heated dwelling. Awake, he, the sceptre of consciousness seizing, shall cry out the password of spirits : *I am !* " But impatient Abiriel here breaks into the plan. Longing to hear once more the music of nerves and to rest in flesh, he buries himself in the body of the man, thrusting its slumbering spirit aside to dwell, as instinct, in the blood. Ohebiel is left aghast at this spirit-suicide, and, seeing the disaster which would issue from man's union with a lower being, descends into the body of the woman, thus to draw him upwards and on.

> " One spirit banished himself from Heaven ;
> the other, self-sacrificing, did follow."

With greatly foreshortened perspective the poet sees the further development of human consciousness :

> " Then man his look toward his own heart bent,
> and saw his spirit ;—now his wrinkles curved
> no more like questions ; but like rods of wisdom,
> a compass on the deep, found Heaven's pole :
> one outstretched body then he saw the world."

Dark, however, is the road which mankind has to travel, dragging along property, stumbling into war, weltering in misery. It is with a sense of relief that we, after toiling through this part of the poem with its everlasting chain of conspiracies between tyrants and priests, see a first straggling ray of light, a messenger of the human spirit. A throng of men are waiting outside a prison door ; a listener reports :

> " No more the laugh of Socrates I hear . . .
> Xenophon weeping . . . Plato speaking low."

At length the life of the Saviour, rising against all adversity, realizes the ideal of truth, love, and freedom, and regains Paradise —the recognition of God in Self—no more to be lost. The poem closes with an enthusiastic prophetic vision of the destiny of Man : Earth has become like Paradise, and Man glorious. Abiriel's glowing fire is blended in the race with the mild spirit of Ohebiel. In woman, however, Ohebiel's spirit dwells, heavenly pure, whilst the flames of Abiriel flash stronger from the heart of the man, even as the diamond's core of light.

The mighty spirit of Man now no longer feels its flesh and blood as a chain on its hands and a bolt at its foot. Like the feathers of birds merely, and a rose-leaf garb, does it feel the weight of its body.

The bright day of Truth, the voices of Duty, and the wing-beat of Liberty triumphant over treacherous desire, fill the temple of his brow, while in his heart burns still and mild the heavenly fire of Brother-love, radiant from his outstretched hands.

Then every human being has a throne within his brain, and in his heart an altar and sacred vessels. Every one is a king to the Earth and a priest to God.

Wergeland's work has the strength and the defects of spontaneity. His soul " expanding from Heaven to Hell " shatters the old forms. Emerging into the universal spring of creation he is beside himself with joy. Hence his style cannot be expected to satisfy the French critic's demand for *propriété, clarté, brièveté, netteté, ordre.* " If a man has anything to say," declares the author of *Walden,* " it drops from him simply and directly, as a stone falls to the ground." But that which comes from Wergeland's hand rises into the air and flies, nor is it always easily caught. He has his own way of thinking into winged forms, which in the case of his writings never leaves doubts about the authorship. We are overwhelmed by a bewildering avalanche of images—for he could think only in the concrete—page-long periods where syntax is on the rack. He himself humorously complains that :

" By parentheses unnumbered
the reader is encumbered ;
but also for the author they are horns
entangling him like Abram's ram in thorns,
ever more hopelessly, in sorry trim,
where he won't get his thought, but the critic will get him."

Wergeland embraces such a number of things with simultaneous interest. By means of the " yellow spot " in the background of

the eye, we see one thing in one moment while the surrounding objects merge into vagueness. In Wergeland the whole background of the eye is golden, and when all that has been gathered there is to be rendered in the long succession of written words, the lines may often take on the shape of a maze —always, however, with something at the centre worth the search.

The faults and flaws, absence of taste and sense of proportion, which are so very evident in the earlier poems, are mainly due to the fact that he could only improvise—rush on and on without ever looking back. *Creation, Man and the Messiah*, which he had proposed to read to some lady acquaintances at the tea-table, grew in a few weeks to a length of more than 700 pages. His pen flies so fast that it sometimes seems to slip the paper, and we miss the trace altogether. There is truth in the picture of thought rising and sinking in its flight, while the word, its shadow, must follow along the ground—the loftier, the dimmer.

To contemporary critics Wergeland's exuberant imagery was impenetrable, and, headed by J. S. Welhaven, they declared Wergeland to be anything but a poet, and a madman more than anything else. Let us give the word to the critics in Welhaven's anonymous address "To Henrik Wergeland" in *Morgenbladet*, 15th August 1830. The first verse reads:

> "How long will you be raving against Reason,
> shaking your lance with Don Quixotic pomp?
> Your silly soaring in and out of season
> is but a sinking towards an endless swamp.
> A sun you think the oily spots that blur it,
> a Pegasus its crocodile, and spur it.
>
> . . . . . .

and the last:

> Complain not then that you are too uplifting,
> too lofty for us other mortals. No!
> In mists and fogs I see no feat in drifting,
> when one has let all reason's moorings go.
> Your place is with a thousand votes secured:
> Chief 'mongst Parnassus *Bedlamites* immured."

Welhaven expressed further his lack of comprehension, together with some sound æsthetic argument, in a review of *Wergeland's Poetics and Polemics* (1832), to which Nikolai Wergeland replied in the following year with *A Just Criticism of Henrik Wergeland's Poetry and Character*. Wergeland and Welhaven represent two—

as yet separate and warring—forces underlying human progress : the desire for *liberty* and the desire for *order*. They are the leading names in the intellectual history of Norway from 1830 to 1845, Welhaven considering pupilage under Denmark still necessary, Wergeland striving to call out all national forces and fructify them through direct contact with as wide a world as possible.

Poets only—so the Indian saying is—are moved by the words of poets ; as the moonbeams raise the ocean, but not the water in wells. Wergeland from the first had only a small knot of understanding readers, with a wider ring of more doubtful applauders who felt that here was something unusual. He well compares himself to the tongue of a bell which is wrapped in a thick, damp covering.

To this spirit, religion and life are naturally one thing. Wergeland would not have religion put in any corner, whether of time or of space. Religion to him was as wide as the world it moves. In that city of the future which, like William Blake, he was consciously building, Love was the gravitation causing the stones to cling together. To the sense which is awake to the actual living connection of every being, self-sacrifice is as much a matter of course as the flowing of water from a higher level to a lower. A new word in morals is here wanted : *egaltruism* might be suggested, as uniting the ancient opposites. "Are not Religion and Politics the same thing ? . . . Brotherhood is Religion," says William Blake.

The consciousness of his calling as a poet, and how he understood it, appears so often throughout Wergeland's work that we must remember that he was upholding his view of the poet's office against the prevailing one. He expresses himself at large in an article " On the Young Swedish Poet, Ridderstad " (January, 1834), in which he charges contemporary Danish literature with aiming exclusively at entertainment : it is a sofa literature. The ancient bards kindled their audience to doughty deeds. They did not lock their souls up in cabinets, but went to their work in the world. They lived in spheres which their times did not yet touch ; their songs were prophecies. . . . We want poets who do not live in Heaven, thence to spit on Earth ; men who are masters of their ideals, and who idealize in order to realize. . . . The true poet can only belong to one party, that of Heaven and of a bettered Earth.[1] For a short while he had followed Oehlenschläger and Tegnér with a couple of ballads and a vigorous picture, as if carved in bold relief on wood, of an old Norse Viking's hall—*Et gammelnorskt herresæde*—

[1] *Om den unge svenske skjald Ridderstad*, vol. v. pp. 184–194.

which wrung applause even from Welhaven; but he soon returned to the "now" with a vengeance—as in his lines *To a Young Poet*:

"Bard! Look thou not behind thee,
not toward the rune-covered stones,
not toward the grave-mound, barbaric days hiding!
Those shields, leave them lying! Let them moulder, those bones!

. . . . . .

Bard! In heavens where Time has not entered with measurèd pace,
the Seer with Victory dwells *ere* the battle,
and together with Hope soars in front of the race.

Flies not his vision ahead of all time, ahead of the world?
The earth-ball behind rolls History's thunder—
the song of the Seer 's the lightning forth-hurl'd." [1]

. . . . . .

The Golden Age lies before us, or behind us only so far as we turn our backs upon it. So Henrik Wergeland, with face lighting up his surroundings, went out over his own land, doing there *his* viking deeds, rooting up dead stumps of convention, sowing, planting new life (from trees to libraries), giving a hand to every undertaking which could help to raise his people, being like the great leader in battle—*everywhere*.

There never was a man with a larger portion of the divine faculty of *awakeness*.[2] But the awakener, according to history, is never a desirable person.

"Most people are good-natured nincompoops,
hating no one but him that would awake them." [3]

What a commotion this man was making! How he did stalk about, bringing his rough Norwegian manners, clothes, and language into the danicized capital. Orator and leader of processions on Constitution Day, the 17th of May, in "the proudest moment of his life," [4] witnessing from his box in the theatre the rout of his literary opponents in a regular battle at the performance of his play, *The Campbells*, and for a time editing an ultra-radical paper of ill repute, *Statsborgeren* (Le Citoyen). Who was this baptist of the bog, who undertook the

[1] Vol. i. p. 80.

[2] If this word may be used to suggest that it is for the gods to be wholly awake, and godlike to have as much of this faculty as possible.

[3] *Mennesket*, vol. iii. p. 254.

[4] *Hasselnödder*, vol. vi. p. 419.

filling of valleys and the crumbling of hills? "Right!" replies the editor:

> "It *is* a bog; and round its side
> grow wholesome buck-leaves, strong and sour.
> There does the water-lily hide,
> that bathing Venus-flower.
>
> With speckled serpent in his beak
> the heron stalks there, proud and slow.
> A spirit does the wild spot seek
> that people never know." [1]

As in the colossal statues which their nation leaves them, the *feet* of these great men are so much in evidence—seen from a lower point of view. Journalists buzzed and lawyers stung, while offended authorities tried to pin him down with actions for libel. "It is hard luck for Henrik Wergeland," rails a contemporary scribbler, "to have to fight a swarm of pygmies that are unable to grasp his real greatness. Posterity no doubt will——" Yes! In Wergeland's own words, "Night-shrouded centuries pass ere a genius wholly descends in a soul." The true proportions will only come out with the distance.

Wergeland would occasionally let what he called his satirical "twin-brother," Siful Sifadda, enter the lists for him—in his *farces*—"and *he* always deported himself bravely." But he has other allies as well. He opens his window and lets in the first butterfly, that it may warm itself in the bosom of his rose. More proud himself than the cold world without, he has need of the love of these little ones.[2] At the time when he was toiling with studies for his theology examination he might fling the book into a corner, snatch up his little tame rabbit, and, gazing into its dim eye, would see the creation of worlds in vista deep and far.[3] His room at Eidsvoll rectory, and later on in his own house, *Grotten* ("The Grotto"), in the outskirts of Kristiania, was like a natural history museum with a zoological garden in addition. He kept a dog, a cat, and a fox together, and made them friends. The reptiles, however, were given notice—as his wife tells us—when *she* moved in. There really never was any serpent in Wergeland's Eden! He was never driven out, but seems to have remained in that garden of the world's youth as Pan in Paradise. His good horse

[1] *Statsborgeren til Collett*, vol. i. p. 162.

[2] *Den förste sommerfugl* (1837), vol. i. pp. 194–197.

[3] Cf. Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p. 175: "Come nigh, little bird, with your half-stretched quivering wings—within you I behold choirs of Angels, and the Lord Himself in vista." Carpenter's work is one of the best introductions to the spirit of Wergeland.

Veslebrunen (Brownie) was a faithful companion, who carried him on his back on his summer excursions, and in winter in a boat-like sleigh of Wergeland's own construction.[1]

Everything to him was alive and lovable. He was in love with the open air, and its vitality pervades his work; these are the living leaves as of a tree, a "foot-drinker," according to the vigorous Sanskrit term, grasping the earth close; *these* also, raised high in the sunlight, are ingatherers of cosmical energy. He converts the sunbeams into joy, and commits his cares to the broad leaves of his ivy.

His resentment evaporates:

IN THE OPEN AIR

"Fly, Spring-time fair, so light and gay,
Fly not with all my spite away!
I fain my anger would have given
one gloomy hour, by hail-storms riven.

In stormy bursts of hail and snow,
which laid the blossoming fruit-tree low,
that hour must plunge its glowing ember,
wherein my wrath I should remember.

Now deep in the soft grass it lies,
sweeter than Love's near touch it dies.
As in warm jets of heart-blood living,
my anger dies away forgiving.

If, once awakening, my scorn
would start a chase and blow the horn,
t' would have to stop for laughter soon
at singing gnats, frogs out of tune.

When the sun shines my grudge is gone.
Such ugly word was never known
to sound from waves upon the beach—
Sweet choir, how gently dost thou teach!

What fair and kindly greetings pass—
would man but see!—from grass to grass.
Like withering straw, he fades away—
why miss the gladness of the May?

Itself a coloured ray, a snake,
basks in the sun; I will not shake
it from my ankle—thou, poor wight,
art innocent! Live and delight!

[1] With ensign flying aft and small brass guns on either side, for saluting. Traits of "Wergeland at home" are given in his friend R. G. Latham's book, *Norway and the Norwegians*, London, 1840.

Of poison, in this blissful minute,
the snake's fang has no least drop in it.
Why should I mind the least those others,
that crawl about on my book-covers ?

Come to the wedding of the thrush !
Wildly but well from his twig (hush !)
he sings, your criticisms and (shocking !)
your codes of art heartily mocking.

Oh, spring-time's sweet and fragrant air !
Believe that sylphs are breathing there ;
but blend not with its breath the dank,
the mouldy sigh—'twere poison rank !

And thou, bird-cherry tree, dost bend,
o'er my low hut, a sheltering friend.
Thy shade thou ne'er to anger yield !
There may no festering sorrow build !

Next spring thou shalt, far as I know,
scatter my grave all with thy snow ;
or, will its flowerets drop inside
the cup I kiss, who have no bride ?

Merrily shake them to the ground,
altho' they fall on my grave-mound !
May Beauty's soulful lover there
make him his seat in th' open air !

Maligner, seat you there, and more
love Nature than you did before !
The secret then you might acquire,
what sound-board she did give my lyre ! " [1]

Outwardly, Henrik Wergeland's life did not seem successful. For years he was continually applying for an appointment as a clergyman, though, considering his attitude towards the tenets of the established church, it may be more of a mystery that he should have applied than that he should not have succeeded. In 1834 he began studying medicine in order to gain his living as a doctor, but discontinued his studies in 1836, when he obtained an assistant librarianship at the University of Kristiania. A pension from King Carl Johan in 1839 enabled him to marry the young girl of his choice (Amalie Bekkevold), a child of the people, whose motherly care for her little sisters and brothers had touched him deeply. The story of his looking for a house to buy with part of the sum received for *The Campbells*, of his leaving his good horse *Veslebrunen* to pick his way through the suburbs ; how Brownie stopped

[1] *I det grönne*, vol. i. p. 207.

at the prostrate figure of a man sleeping on the road, and how the man's cottage was straightway purchased; how the idyllic abode on the fjord necessitated the keeping of a boat and the daily depositing of oars, etc., at a boatman's house on the town side, and the boatman having a daughter. . . . All this is simply and charmingly told in the autobiographic sketches—*Hasselnödder*.[1]

Some of the poems to his Amalie (*Poesier*, 1838) are unsurpassed in the love poetry of any tongue. In the ecstatic odes to "Stella" the youth in his quest of the eternal feminine was whirled among the stars. Now the man is walking with his love among flowers. Yet, to draw his "mermaid" he had declared:

"More fantastic fancies forming
speeds my frenzy onward, storming,
than the coral branches swarming
in th' abyss profound.
Ah, less glorious, less divine
is the Ocean's breast than mine:
memories sparkle there, thoughts shine
from its deepest ground."

The gratuity from the King had only been accepted on the express condition that the poet should publish a magazine and various works for the enlightenment of the people. But friends and foes were now agreed that Wergeland had become a court-pensioner and a traitor. He was banned by the "good society," and in the *very* best circles his name was not mentioned without apology. What was hardest to him was that they tried to rob him of the people's faith. But he looked through them. Even when, mortally ill, his means having gone to pay for endless law-suits, he was turned out of his grotto—even then his faith did not forsake him, and in his lines, *The Grotto at Auction*, he alludes to his persecutor in the following words:

"It may be superstition, or
again it may not be:
the thought is near
and very clear,
that tho' my evil spirit *here*
an ugly black chrysalis wore,
a winged elf was he." [2]

The fate of such men calls forth needless commiseration from those who see the opposing mountains of difficulties, but do not feel the joy of rising above them. There is a poetic sense which in

[1] Vol. vi. pp. 321–328.
[2] From *Auktion over Grotten*, vol. i. pp. 446–449.

the life of action, as well as in that of imagination, accepts a law that is its liberty :

> " No other rest is the spirit allowed
> than the soaring eagle's, piercing the cloud
> on strong extended pinion."

In 1840 Wergeland was appointed keeper of the public records, and many respectable people heaved a sigh of relief to see the demagogue in the arms of the State—safe at last ! Having access to the State archives, he now wrote his standard work on the *History of the Norwegian Constitution*.[1] In the following years he issues a number of larger poems, which by their perfect artistic expression have become recognized classics. It is doubtful whether the year 1840, at the celebration of the fourth centenary of the Printing Press, heard a grander cantata than Wergeland's *Vord Lys !* (Let there be light !) It opens with a description of physical light dawning on the earth.[2] Clothing matter and motion with life it raises the lofty figure of human genius as on a pediment of rays, rounding it with a mystical song of the soul, of that light-blood which flows through spirits, and which the grave's maw can never drain.

From this maturer period of Wergeland's life are some of his most popular poems like *The English Pilot*, 1844. Sprung from impressions gathered on his visit to England in the summer of 1831, this poem contains vivid descriptions of English scenery, testifying to the poet's swift and sure grasp of the typical in landscape.[3] Norwegian nature he rendered in its essentials : the sombre fir, the waterfall, in whose voice he hears the name of " *Norge !* ", the meeting of rugged peak and glacier with the fair, green valley. The graceful, undulating plains, south of the seas, spring and autumn

[1] *Norges Konstitutions Historie* (1841–43). Recently republished with an introduction by Professor J. E. Sars. The work is nowise " forgotten," as stated in the article on H. W. in vol. xxviii. of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition, and in the *New International Encyclopædia* (New York, 1904). Both articles totally underrate the importance of Wergeland's works. The position of Henrik Wergeland himself in the history of his country is seen in Professor Sars' great work on the political history of Norway in the 19th century.

[2] " the insect's pliant feelers then
th' awakening concept waved."

[3] In *The English Pilot* is the *Greeting to England*, which, in Mrs. Morison's translation, was read at the banquet for Norwegian seamen in London, on the 12th of April 1917.

It may be mentioned that, besides the six or seven poems and plays which Wergeland wrote on English subjects, he translated at least seventeen poems from English, including *Rule Britannia* ; S. T. Coleridge : *Domestic Peace* ; Robert Burns : *Auld Lang Syne, John Anderson, etc.* From Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* and *Manfred*, Act 1. W. Pitt : *On Sea and on Land in a Storm.*

have moulded, hand in hand ; summer and winter have forged out old Norway between them. Welhaven, who could draw on the wealth of Norse folklore, unearthed towards the middle of the century, and a gradually extended knowledge of the country and the people, advanced further in the production of the specific Norwegian colour, leading on to Bjørnson's unitive vision of land and people.

We need not follow Henrik Wergeland about all through his tumultuous working-day in order to find out at last where he lives. He who is the truest son of his mother earth is also bound with the strongest ties to his mother country. Perhaps he comes nearest in his lovely poems of childhood. What Norwegian has not once felt *our* sun and *our* summer there ? At his touch the meadow spreads out green and yellow, and we are running barefoot in the grass once more. And we stand in the Christmas dawn side by side with the wondering child, gazing at the beautiful flowers that grow all over the window, and feel the breath of life which called this glorious winter-bloom into being.

What unites the varied activity of this showerer of actions is the underlying idea of *help*. The poor and miserable, wrote his father, were the surest to gain his heart.[1] He needed, as Professor Collin says, the help of some one whom he might help. Thus did the thought of those who were persecuted and outlawed help him to produce those flowering rose-tree branches, as his poems are called, *Jøden* (The Jew) in 1842, and *Jødinden* (The Jewess) in 1844.[2] The attitude of his countrymen to the foreigners is given in a humorous conversation between the maple and the fir. The former has allowed a merry swarm of bees to settle in its top, and gets honey and sweet music in return :

" Each twig is full of bustle gay ;
a cup now every leaf
reaches to lips of honest toil,
where crept a hairy thief."

[1] This altruism might even run into the burlesque, as in this verse of his *Ham and Brawn Song* :

" Many a pastor
's the pig's master
as to growing fat ;
many a stout dame ever
shows the same endeavour—
but they care not
if they share not
with their fellows that."

[2] The Jews were admitted to the kingdom in 1851, six years after Wergeland's death. In 1849 a memorial was raised on the poet's grave by " grateful Jews outside the confines of Norway."

But the fir is not going to give up its principles :

> " My turpentine upon the rock
> flows down like melted ore ;
> thus it has done a hundred years,
> and shall a hundred more."

In the introductory poem in *The Jew* there is a tone of defiance :

> " *Words !* deemed on earth so low !
> Poet's word,
> deemed of all the most absurd. . . ."

Almost losing patience in his struggle for the cause of Humanity he expresses the wish that, Truth herself descending on earth : " not with words her wings be plumed, but with swords ! " [1] True to his vow to be the knight of " snake-chained Humanity," even Wergeland could not but feel more and more the overwhelming weight of his task. He is like the little boy who has gone out in the early morning to destroy his father's enemies, the crowds of thistles rolling in waves of flame over the fields.[2] He will gather before night all the white thistle-down for his grandmother's pillow. He mows and toils, heedless of the sun's rays. The thorns are red with his blood, and at every step he might plant his foot on the swollen coils of a snake in the dense growth. Onward ! Onward !

Already the midday sun has passed high over the woods. Slowly the shadow is growing behind him—like the poltroon's courage, when he feels himself unnoticed—and still the waves are rolling in upon his little clearing, which is sucked like a whirl into the ocean. The wind after noon has raised fresh thousands, emerging like slaves, bold with their numbers. His arms sink down ; the wind carries away most of his harvest and sends a flying spray of thistle-down into his face.

Even so bootless is the labour of Love to conquer suffering, which is abundant as the vices (the bleaching of whose countless flaming thistle-heads it is), so that the field of Humanity is deluged by these flowering and fading millions. What is the use of our toil ? Were it not best to leave to Death the work of clearing ?

Ah ! but will not grandmother's love fill up the boy's ever-hungering bag, in which the down was to be gathered ? Its riches have melted to the size of a snowball, but she will take the weeping boy to her heart and the down under her head

[1] *Sandhedens armee*, vol. ii. pp. 301, 302.
[2] *Tistelskjæg-plukkeren* in *Jøden*, vol. ii. pp. 327–329.

and declare that it has breathed heavenly sleep about her limbs.

Fight on, therefore, with good courage! God does not count more than the will. Your cheek aglow in the struggle for the good cause shall draw angels to your side, who kneeling collect the drops from your brow to become stars in the heaven where your spirit shall live, whence the lowering banks of your days shall appear as distant vine-hills, swathed in sunshine.

General misunderstanding of his character and motives produced some of the sharpest thorns on Wergeland's path; the suspicion gathering round his relation to the somewhat arbitrary and not altogether popular sovereign of the united kingdoms, Carl Johan, may have hurt him most. When early in 1844 the King lay dying, Wergeland wrote his passionate lyric *The King is in Pain*,[1] wishing ardently—and he meant it—that he might heal the sufferer with his own life-blood. His strength should flow into the veins of the exhausted man, and then:

> "When the King opened his eyes,
> soared an eagle to the skies,
> Death's eluded token.
> At his bed's foot loud did ring
> the clangour of a broken string,
> at highest quiv'ring broken."

"*At highest quivering broken!*" The words were shortly to come true. In the early spring of 1844 Wergeland caught a violent cold in his "dungeon," deep under Akershus Castle. He went on for a time conducting from his bed the business of his office (the State archives), and worked, worked with increasing intensity. There were so many things to be finished, and above all there was the revising of *Creation, Man, and the Messiah*, which he handled severely, greatly improving the artistic expression without altering the spirit, thus leaving in his corner of this earth one of its loftiest visions of the world through the medium of human consciousness.

Only an absolute faith in the All-being and in the perfectibility of man can explain the energy displayed by this dying man, in continued endeavour for the common weal, if possible, greater than ever before in his intensely vigorous life. Again, as when formerly he was writing *Creation*, two printing-presses could hardly keep up with his production. Then he thought of the cottars at Eidsvoll and sent them packets of garden seeds with instructions for use. Of himself he did not think till he could say that his self was almost

[1] *Kongen lider*, vol. i. p. 434.

gone : " A remnant burnt out in a severe fire is left ; and its worth is soon to be decided." [1]

His countrymen were somehow being drawn towards their dying bard, and former friends who had for years kept aloof or attacked him, came to be reconciled again. The interest now shown would sometimes become distasteful to him, as when he scribbled on the label of a medicine-bottle :

> " Now that I've scarcely a pint left of blood,
> now I am beautiful, now I am good.
> Now that I'm fainting,
> busts they are making and portraits they're painting." [2]

The hardest time for him was when, in the spring 1845, he had to spend ten days at the hospital after leaving " The Grotto," and before he could be removed to his new cottage, *Hjerterum* (" Heart-room "). But here, through the tall, bare window of his ward, the moon brought in her silver basket those lovely white roses, the *Nights in the Hospital.*[3]

During the last months of his life Wergeland wrote his fresh, frank autobiographical sketches, *Hazel Nuts,* with plenty of good humour in them, mostly of past days at home and abroad, with an occasional glimpse of present events or shadows of the coming. Well-meaning friends have sent him prayer-books, and remind him of Death who has stood outside waiting so long. He opens the door a moment, pulls the Reaper himself in, and introduces him to the living.

THE PERSONAL BEAUTY OF DEATH [4]

" My increasing indisposition had become known to that friend of mine, who could laugh on one side of his face, while the darkest gloom reigned on the other, and who now came to have the notes of hope changed into the gold of certainty.

" ' Thou foul and evil Death ! ' he cried hotly. ' Do not come here and play the Country and Literature a nasty trick ! '

" ' Hush ! Be quiet ! ' I whispered. ' He is near.'

" I was not then strong enough to joke with him, though

[1] *Hasselnödder,* vol. vi. p. 438. There are interesting points of analogy between the Norwegian poet and the Italian Giordano Bruno. The philosophy of both was a religion springing from a constitutional abundance of natural spirits. Both professed the task of *torchbearer* and *awakener,* and the same intense feeling of universal unity inspires their works.

[2] *Hasselnödder,* vol. vi. p. 440.

[3] Vol. i. pp. 472–475.

[4] *Hasselnödder,* vol. vi. pp. 357–358.

I should soon have turned the Janus face, but on a piece of paper I wrote :

'*He* deserves to be run thro' by the long blue rapier of a deadly draught,
who says that Death is ugly and evil.

Evil? For one year I have now been living by his mercy,
turned away by Life, because I would suck *her* too long
and made her breasts bleed with my greediness.

Ugly? My God! Where is there a slimmer and more well-knit gentleman?
A mantle and a plumed hat, and he will outdo all the conquests of Don Juan.
Even the worms of Death are not so ugly as those that just now crept over me: the false friend's fingers.
His figure has the beauty of regularity,
his face that of openness, and what can be more pleasing?

He may, however, be finer behind than in front;
but how many men are not?
A Janus face at least he has not got.

But you who have—what if even the bones
in your face are twisted, when you have
no flesh-mask to draw over them?
Then who finds your skeleton might call Death ugly.'"

Still, Wergeland could not but yearn for more of the strong earth-life which he had drunk in so eagerly. One May morning there appeared in *Morgenbladet* two poems[1] from his hand. One is addressed :

TO SPRING

"O Spring! Spring! Save me!
No one has loved thee more dearly than I.

Thy first grass to me is worth more than emeralds.
I call thy anemones the pride of the year,
altho' I know that the roses are coming.

Often did they, fiery, stretch out after me.
It was like being loved by princesses,
But I fled: Anemone, Spring's daughter had my troth.

Oh witness, Anemone, before whom I have fervently knelt.
Witness, contemned Dandelion[2] and Colt's-foot,
that I have valued you more than gold, because you are Spring's children.

[1] *Til Foraaret* and *Til min Gyldenlak*, vol. i. pp. 476–477.

[2] "The flower that grows the more it's trodden" was Wergeland's chosen emblem.

Witness, Swallow! that I made ready for thee
as for a long-lost child home again returned,—
thou wert the messenger of Spring!

Seek the Lord of these clouds and pray
that they may no longer throw darts into my breast
from out of their cold, blue openings.

Witness, Old Tree! whom I have worshipped like a god,
and whose buds I have counted every spring more eagerly than pearls.

Witness, thou whom I have so often embraced,
with the reverence of a great-grandson for his great-grandfather.
Yea, how often have I not wished to be a young maple of thy deathless root,
and to blend my crown with thine!

Be my witness, Ancient One! Thou wilt be believed;
for thou art venerable as a patriarch.

Pray for me, and I will pour wine on thy roots
and heal thy scars with kisses.

Now thou art robed in thy fairest light green;
thy leaves are rustling already.

O Spring! The old one is crying out for me, altho' he is hoarse.
He stretches his arms towards Heaven,
and the anemones, thy blue-eyed children, kneel and pray
that thou wilt save me—me who love thee so dearly."

There is no longer any struggle in the following lines:

TO MY WALLFLOWER[1]

"Wallflower mine, ere thy bright hues fade,
I shall be that whereof all is made;
ere thou hast shattered thy crown of gold,
I shall be mould.

When 'Open the window!' I call, from my bed,
my last look is for thy golden head;
my soul will kiss it, as over thee
it flieth free.

Twice do I kiss thy lips so sweet,
Thine is the first, as it is meet;
the second, dearest, remember close
on my fair rose!

[1] There are several translations of these beautiful lines, *e.g.* by Edm. Gosse, *Northern Studies*, and by Miles M. Dawson, *The American Scandinavian Review*, October 1916. The similarities in rhyme in these translations are due to the original. The present translator's attempt was made years before he saw any of the above-mentioned ones.

In bloom no more I shall it see;
so give it my greeting, when that shall be,
and say I wished on my grave should all
its petals fall.

Yes, say I wish that upon my breast
the rose thou givest my kiss shall rest;
and, Wallflower, be in Death's dark porch
its bridal torch!"

Never had Henrik Wergeland started more cheerfully on any adventure than now, as he sang in the last of his sea songs, *Sidste Reis!* Beyond his hope he was at last carried into the fairyland of his flowering rose tree:

"Wonderful! Ah, more than wonderful!
Miracle! Oh, miracle!
Oh, that my knees could bend in adoration!

My soul has folded up its wings,
kneeling as in a veiled chapel;
for my eyes have closed over the glory of the vision that I have beheld. . . ." [1]

A late word of acknowledgment came from over the seas, from Denmark. A letter dated:

"COPENHAGEN,
7th July 1845.

From the first moment that I saw you — in the realm of the spirits, in your poetical works—I have loved you. I have often thought what a joy it would be to meet you face to face.

But now the Norwegian students tell me that you are very ill; and from your last poem, *The Beautiful Family*, I see that you are yourself prepared to leave ere long.

Now I can be silent no longer, I feel as though I shall never be at peace if I cannot speak to you, if I shall not be able to tell you that I love you.

When I think of you, Wergeland, I am proud to be a human being. Here at last we have a man who looks death in the face, who sings like Gunnar while death is burrowing towards his heart. Here we have proof that immortality does exist, and that God has given to man a divine soul.

Wergeland! Let me thank you for this, and for all the beautiful hours that you have given me. Let me greet you as the greatest living poet, who in his works has brought before my mind's eye the picture of a northern granite rock, whereon grow palms and golden fruit of the south.

[1] Opening lines of *Den smukke Familie*, vol. i. p. 478.

Would that this greeting may reach you alive! When you are gone all the world will be saying how great and glorious you were; I want to say it to yourself; you shall receive my respectful homage while you are yet on earth. And, although my voice be feeble, still it is a human voice; even though you should own no soul but mine, still you did own a human soul, which is the greatest thing that a man can conquer. M. GOLDSCHMIDT."

This tribute did reach Henrik Wergeland, just in time. The last day in his life he had made a day of rest. The lines he wrote back, and sent with a lock of his hair, were not decipherable. But in the night between the 11th and 12th of July he opened his eyes and said: "Now I had such a sweet dream; I dreamt that I lay in my mother's arms."

His work-cell had collapsed, but his work cannot die, for it lies at the heart of human progress towards the realization of a fuller, truer humanity.[1]

[1] Professor CHR. COLLIN writes in his chapter on Wergeland in *Det Geniale Menneske* (The Man of Genius), p. 40: "From Henrik Wergeland's death-bed there proceeds a force which the people of Norway can never lose—a life-force gained in struggle with Death. I firmly believe that—not only for Norway, but for the whole of the Western World—will the fight against the thought of Death be one on whose issue our whole morale will depend. Now as in Wergeland's youth the thought of Death broods like a dark cloud over a great part, perhaps over the greatest part, of the Literature of the World. Still darker will the prospect become, if the idea gains ground that Western Civilization has culminated and is beginning to wither. The time may soon come when all peoples of European race will again want the poets of Hope from the Age of the Great Feelings. Then Henrik Wergeland, together with Goethe and Schiller, Victor Hugo and Shelley, Bjørnson, Tolstoy, and many others, will give help to the whole European family, as Shakespeare or as the great Greek poets did to preceding ages."

CHAPTER V

J. S. WELHAVEN AND THE LATER ROMANTICISTS

THE names of Henrik Wergeland and Johan Welhaven have become so strongly linked together that it is difficult to dissociate them; but we intend to present Welhaven here, as far as possible, free from relation to the man and poet against whom he expended so much of his energy.

JOHAN SEBASTIAN CAMMERMEYER WELHAVEN was born in December 1807, in Bergen, the town of Holberg. His father, Johan Ernst Welhaven, was chaplain at the Lepers' Hospital. He was noted for his kind heart, and for his histrionic faculties, which appeared in the way he accompanied his sermons by acting. Pastor Welhaven was quite a well-known Bergen figure, striding on a Sunday in haste, with high-kilted cassock, from one service to take another; and little Johan is said to have often followed with hardly equal steps. His mother was on her mother's side related to that celebrated family of critics, the Danish Heibergs. Through her he may have inherited that keen sense for form which characterized his productions from the first to the last.

Neither at home nor at school was Johan what is known as a "good" boy. Wilful, violent, with little industry in work which he did not choose for himself, and little of manners towards the company he might be placed in.

Together with a younger sister, Johan got books from a learned parish clerk's library. Above all, he revelled in Lavater's great work on Human Physiognomy. The boy's extreme interest in the subject was the source of frequent discomfiture in his father's hospitable house. Years later, when a student at Kristiania, Welhaven could walk up to an unknown person and ask without ceremony, "Now, what type of phiz is this?". And in 1835, in the midst of heated controversy, he writes to a Danish friend: "Here are my enemies, people with dogs' heads and with cods' heads, some with spikes, others with claws or sharks' teeth. If I walk quietly in the street they come sniffing and grunting and whining, as if to say that they would like to eat me if it were not against the police regulations."

At school Johan was really successful only at the classes of LYDER SAGEN, the teacher of Dano-Norwegian (*morsmaalet*). This man had acquired his ideas from the æsthetic circles in Denmark about the close of the 18th century, and he got a forum for his cult of a polished style at the grammar school of Bergen—a town where, up till then, "one heard of nothing but freights, bills of exchange, and dried fish." And many are the pupils of Sagen's who, in later life, brought his ideas of art to bear with all the weight of culture and tradition on our intellectual development.

Welhaven's first public appearance was as the foremost critic and opposer of WERGELAND. These two young men divided the students' world between them, and carried on during the early thirties a battle of ideas which spread wide in the young Norwegian society. Professor Arne Löchen, Welhaven's biographer, employs this simile: "As the deep, rich soil on the banks of Lake Mjösen on a spring day draws in so much sunshine that a vapour rises from it which seems to struggle with the light itself and dim it, thus Henrik Wergeland stood in the fulness of his nature, with all the sunlight on him." But Wergeland's imagination for which, as Bjørnson said, the least thing was large enough and the greatest too small, was to Welhaven the very mists that obscured "the dawn of Norway."

The crude settlers' conditions in the Norwegian capital, a town with much less of traditions and civilization of its own than Bergen, jarred on Welhaven's nerves, and led to his first sustained effort in verse, *Norges Dæmring* (1834). One can still read with some pleasure these elegant sonnets of discontent, in which the only gleam of light seems to come and go with the motto from Byron:

> "Night wanes—the vapours round the mountains curl'd
> melt into morn, and Light awakes the world."

This is the picture of the country given in the opening sonnet:

> "Seest thou Norway from the ocean—Hark!
> the storm its weight against the mountain casts—
> the land appears to thee a giant wreck;
>
> O'er hungry waves the hull is looming dark,
> the mountain summits stand like broken masts,
> clouds wave distress over the storm-swept deck."

In the Prologue we are told that:

> "While Norway is sleeping in her silvery armour
> and even her breath is freezing in the air . . .
> here in the snow I've made a trench or two
> a kind of Roman wall of home dimensions,
> and here I play with literary lances."

The cold grasps the people at the heart and mists settle on its mind:

> "Who does not feel how much is wasted,
> our intellectual life how dull and slow,
> and that *one* reason is, we swallow raw
> the substance which should first be tasted."

In all the material hubbub and activity:

> "In this I only see so far the land
> that watches greedily for crumbs from heaven,—
> where fight with elements the spirit warps;
>
> But lacking unity and zeal for leaven,
> without creative art in busy hand
> is Norway nothing but a painted corpse."

He has no faith in the absorbing interest in politics of his countrymen. Until a high stage of national culture is reached, political activity seems to him more apt to divide than to unite the nation's will and endeavour. The only noble and valuable strain in the people's life is in the peasants' traditions, preserved like a precious rust from Saga's iron age. And here lies one hope of the future, as it is repeated in the closing lines of the poem:

> "Thy homestead, peasant, is on holy ground:
> What Norway was, that she again shall be
> on land, on sea, and in the rank of nations."

On the whole, *The Dawn of Norway* impatiently and rather unfairly arraigns the drawbacks resulting from the young and undeveloped stage of most of our institutions. It was like scolding because one could not feel quite at home in an unfinished house.

When the poem appeared, on Oehlenschläger's birthday (14th November 1834), it caused a great outcry. Nikolai Wergeland exhorted the people to burn in public all available copies of the book on the next 17th of May (Constitution Day), and this was actually in some places done. Welhaven braved the popular indignation in a superior way. He answered the voluble outburst of an old ecclesiastic, Herzberg, in Hardanger, who thanked God that his friend, old Welhaven, was not living to see his son's unpatriotic work, with some dignified lines ending:

> "Because enlightenment you were pursuing,
> still burning for our land with ardour true;
> because you did not know what you were doing,
> therefore, old man, I have forgiven you."

Henrik Wergeland's name is not mentioned in *The Dawn of Norway*, but still it has been aptly said that his giant forms are

dimly seen behind each sonnet. Round Welhaven stood the other prominent members of the "Intelligents-parti," foremost its strong man, ANTON MARTIN SCHWEIGAARD, the future Professor of Law, a keen student of John Stuart Mill and of English thought generally. He was afterwards a great figure in the economic history of Norway. Another most influential member was PETER ANDREAS MUNCH,[1] the sagacious historian and learned philologist. Welhaven was the *bel esprit* of the company who formulated its literary creed.

The question to him was not so much *what* the author has brought forth as *how* he has produced it. Inspiration is the fire that makes the metal malleable, but then it must be hammered steadily by the intellect. Finally, a higher instinct supervenes, which subtly and infallibly leads the artist to his goal. He saw in a masterful calm and clearness the first quality in a work of art. The artist must stand critically outside his work. Even in lyrical poetry it was, above all, the moments of inward serenity that should be fixed and retained. Seen from this point of view, Henrik Wergeland, with his preposterous "out-trumpeting of thirteen cherubs and thirteen seraphs," is nothing less than a monstrosity.

He has again and again put it clearly in his verse, as, for instance, in *Digtets Aand* (The Soul of the Poem):

"What words can ne'er betoken
in the richest tongue on earth,
to what remains unspoken
the poem shall give birth.

From the narrow mould of language,
from the straitening garment whole,
a shining thought arises;
that is the poem's soul."

The year 1836 is in some respects an important one in Welhaven's development. It was then, he says, that it dawned on him that the world of poetry largely coincides with the world of everyday life. In this year he visited Paris, where he was less impressed by the temporary romantic revival and "renascence of wonder" than by the ever clear and lucid *génie* of France. In his first collection of poems (1839), which are largely an *apologia pro vitâ suâ*, there are a few poems inspired by scenes and situations in Paris—for instance, the picture of the silent guest at the humble café in Barrière de la Santé, whom the noisy republicans would force to join in a toast for Poland, and who, in reply, bares

[1] Pronounced "mŏŏngk." See p. 101.

his breast and shows them the scars of Ostrolenka, and leaving them stupefied, goes out where " heaven has stars and the night is dumb." A couple of poems on antique subjects have reference to Wergeland and himself: *Glaukos*, the demigod of the sea, who descended to the growth of the deep and allowed himself to be worshipped and bound there—*Sisyphos*, whose compensation it is that the stone, always tumbling down again, always breaks some reptile's neck. In a more hopeful mood, he is *Nehemiah*, with his men who choose to build with the sword girded by their sides, and who inspire respect.

Like *The Dawn of Norway*, these are perfect specimens of composition and craftsmanship; but a new note is struck in a group of these poems of deep communion with the Vestland scenery of his childhood:

> " Know you the cool, dark, silent valleys,
> without a hearth, without a path or name,
> by whose dark rivers weeping birches tremble?
> They taught me all my longing and desire."

Welhaven has exchanged some of his nature with that of the Vestland, and has added something to our comprehension of its scenery.

Through his personality, however, Welhaven exerted in a direct way a considerably larger influence than through his written word. He was a man who commanded attention wherever he went. Tall, erect, dark, with sparkling brown eyes, and a peculiar radiance about him. The ladies of the town would walk round and round the promenade of Akershus Castle to get a glimpse of " Student Welhaven." He had almost *too* much of animal spirits, says his nephew, the historian Sars. His gesticulations were so lively that one risked a box on the ear now and then if walking with him in conversation. The converse would be mostly a monologue by him, working up to some crushing epigram that put a full stop to further discussion. He would always speak with vigour, even vehemence, alert and *en garde*, and as if wearing a steel corslet under his clothes. When he joined a social gathering, he would first stride through all the rooms, throwing searching glances on everybody and everything. All felt that now they were being classed, accepted, or, mostly, rejected.

His contemporaries all speak of Welhaven's terrible criticism. This was simply his nature; but no doubt he indulged too much in regarding his neighbour mainly as a butt for his wit. He lacked an equal to oppose him, and grew to be what Camilla Collett, Wergeland's sister, calls, " l'enfant chéri et terrible " of the town.

He might well complain of the misfortunes of genius in such small societies where they are like a large stove in a small room, so that it must get too hot for somebody; he proposed that the community should build asylums for men of genius where they should be well entertained and paid in return for keeping their silence.

With all that Welhaven was as sensitive as any one, and if he wounded many with his sharp tongue, and by his arrogance lost more and more of his early friends, he at least expiated his sins at the hands of the "good" folk of the little community. "The flies," he once remarked, "talked about the bee while they were eating honey. They dwelt especially on its venomous sting, and when they had finished their talk and the honey, they thanked the god of flies that they had not been made bees." He felt his aggressiveness to be, as it were, a means of defence, and explains this in *Det tornede Træ* (The Thorny Tree):

"If you love the tree you must not hate
the pointed thorn among leaves and blossoms.
When the tree was young, with the tenderest skin,
the thorn was a thwarted, stunted bud;
a thorn is a branch that is damaged.

Think what the budding life must suffer
where darkness reigns and the mists advance.
Yes, look around on the barren spot,
where the tree was tortured and clothed with thorns,
and yet bore blossoms, fair and fragrant.

Among all the joys that spring unfolds
the thorn is a sorrow the plant retains.
It says in the dumb speech of its kind:
'I wound but, alas, I also bear
A greater pain than I ever give!'"

All Welhaven's maturer poetry is rooted in intimate personal experience. He is always directing his vision inwards to the core of his being, that from which Wergeland looked out. One can sit and read again and again a poem by Welhaven—Wergeland one can hardly read without getting *up*.

Welhaven's relation to CAMILLA COLLETT is treated in a later chapter. To him it did not mean one fraction of what it did to her; it was only a passing encounter with an equal and responsive spirit. He was attracted in quite another way to the less equal but to him more sympathetic IDA KJERULF, the sister of the composer, who wrote such exquisite music to Welhaven's songs. She was an extremely delicate girl, and from the time when her father

consented to her engagement with the penniless undergraduate, she was actually dying of consumption. At her death, in December 1840, Welhaven fled from Kristiania to be alone with his grief. The deepest and purest of his *New Poems* (1845) and *Poems* (1848) are consecrated to her memory, *e.g. The Blessed One* (*Den Salige*), who returns to him with assurance that they shall never be separated, and the ballad of *Sir Gilbert*, who sat by his wife's corpse through the monks' long litany, with the cold, dead hands in his own—who was drawn by the elf-woman's luring song into the grove and received the cup of oblivion, but flung it away high over the lindens and the foaming brook, and found himself back at his castle gate :

" His faith had been tested and proven."

Then his sorrow was freed ; he could kneel in prayer and rise to combat with a new courage :

" He bore a shield amongst warriors bold
that from hundreds of other shields was told ;
a goblet inverted was painted thereon,
and showed what Sir Gilbert the brave had won,
who fast his sorrow would hold."

These poems were written years after the loved one's death, when the poet had, in 1845, married the daughter of a French emigrant, the spirited and cultured Josephine Bidoulac.

After his return from France in 1837, Welhaven had given a series of public lectures at Kristiania on the history of Danish and Norwegian literature. They were a novelty, and had been very well attended. When, in 1839, a University lectureship in Philosophy was advertised, Welhaven applied, and was, after a lengthy discussion, chosen by the Senate, and appointed. It would not be expected that he should go very deep into metaphysics. Like his friend Schweigaard, he disposed of Hegel's system as " a juggling with auxiliary verbs." For his first course he chose the history of Mediæval Scholasticism, which formed a fairly safe platform for the dialectician to produce himself on. It may be said that he beat his gold thin, and made good use of his satirical faculty. He had a definite dislike of the neutral and lukewarm, the man who (in Blake's words) " observes the golden rule till he becomes the golden fool." His somewhat strained satire may remind one of George Eliot. " The conservative," he says, " moves no mountains ; but he walks round and round the mountain until he has worn out a footpath, for exercise and the improvement of his appetite. He will not go out to catch game ; but he does not mind sitting day and night by a salmon-net, gazing into the water

until there comes a fish swimming. Then he draws his net together as the fish might otherwise swim out again."

Welhaven was by inclination a stay-at-home, and did not travel much beyond his Paris tour. Italy he found to be a European illusion called up by Goethe. The "purple Apennine" looked to him like cigar-ashes. He wrote no poem there. In his *Autumn Song* he declares that, were he able to follow the birds of passage, he would still stay among Norwegian firs. Denmark, however, he did not consider as a foreign country, but rather as a lost Eden where the gentlest strains in his nature might grow, whilst "here at home one never gets a chance of unharnessing one's coat of mail, and at last grows into a sort of armadillo."

A new source of inspiration and material for poetic treatment Welhaven, with his contemporaries, found through the opening up of communication with the national life of the inland valleys by the pioneers of folklore and related research. He himself undertook a summer excursion up the river Begna. On its lower quiet reaches he is surprised to find himself "in one of those bits of landscape which the imaginative spirit of our highlands seems to have formed after the pattern of the milder nature of more southerly regions." In his account of this tour through *Woods and Rivers* the artist's view is dominant: "The whole scene awaits the landscape-painter; he will find all lines and forms so finely arranged that there will be nothing to add or subtract."[1] At other times the poet-interpreter comes forward, for instance, to explain the mood which in the common people's mind finds expression in myth and legend. "Among stern and cowing scenes man is liable to lapse into stupor and brutishness, if unable to throw over the hard environment some of his own inner life. As the echo among the cliffs in ever softer repetition responds to the human voice, in some such way the first harsh impression may return with a milder, more familiar cast. Then the spirit can quicken the wilderness."—"Thus," he says in another passage, "I had entered into a quiet understanding with the darkening evening scene, and its oppression departed before I had become aware of the human life belonging to it."

The collections of poems he published at the height of the national romantic movement, about the year 1850, contain a number of lyrical ballads or romances. With their clearly drawn pictures

[1] For several years Welhaven had worked as a draughtsman while feeling for his true vocation, among other things preparing lithographs for a translation of Scott's novels, and—by the irony of fate—the frontispiece to Wergeland's *Creation*.

of the life and ideals of the peasant, as far as they were then known, these short romances have become the most popular of all his poems. Here he reached his highest level, as, for instance, in the ballad of *St. Olaf by the Fjord*, where the words themselves are colour and music. Here obtains what he himself has said of some one else :

> " In one collected and translucent image,
> With light and shade before him lay the land."

In some of them is easily seen that idealizing of popular superstitions which may be expected from his folklore theory. *Nøkken*, the evil, treacherous sprite of the waterfall, becomes a lover pining for the rose, and jealous of the happy elves of dream that can visit her. *Huldra*, the female spirit of the woods and fells (who, in common folklore, is so material as to be provided with a cow's tail), is to Welhaven the inmost, deepest mood in the nature of Norway, spellbound most of the year, but alive in the fair night of the Northern midsummer.

Several of the heroes of the ballads (like *Eivind Bolt* and *Harald fra Reine*) have been in the bonds of Huldra, and at heart remain so bound, and therefore more or less alien to their human surroundings, for the rest of their lives. Welhaven could, with a particular sympathy, portray such lonely figures ; for he was himself increasingly a lonely man. As has been intimated, he felt little sympathy with the predominant materialistic interests of the fifties, when his former ally, Schweigaard, was giving the tone and applying himself wholly to the promotion of the industries—*næringsveiene* (" ways to subsistence," as we say in Norway). No one was following *his* ideal of self-realization, after which the other things would be added.

At the same time as doubt and melancholy were gradually undermining his activity, in his later poems the threatening Nehemiah ring from the builder's sword at his side gives way to an increasing note of resignation and reconciliation. He is coming into the evening of life, which had ever been his chosen hour, with its afterglow of day's full joy. He was himself drawing nearer to the realization of his ideal—liberation through struggle—his lifelong conviction of the soul's power to cast off the weight of sorrow and to look calmly backward through the perspective of the passed scenes of life, when all things are correlated, the present and living with that which the recording mind calls " dead." There is a sense of supreme rest in his last poems, and an overspreading light —*det guddommelige lys*, " visions of peace and deeper peace." It is not the embracing pantheism of Goethe or of Wergeland, but

the goal of a long sustained striving towards the one ideal. It is found in one of Welhaven's last poems :

GANYMEDÉS

"On Ida's brow, in shelter of the pine-woods,
the god's descendant Ganymedés stood.
He saw the Dardans' land spread out below,
and far away its silvered, rocky coast.
Whilst vernal breezes touched the pine-tree leaves,
and cymbals loud from Rhea's temple sounded,
and morning rays flowed in from the high ether,
a nameless tremor in his breast arose.

Sudden his young heart tremblingly did feel
the life divine that smouldered in his race,
and from the soaring cloud above him swooped
the mighty eagle, carrier of Olympus' flames.
With terror, round his yielding, snow-white limbs
he felt the firm grip of the eagle's claw ;
in vain with unexperienced hands he struggled
against the wing-beat of the giant bird.

Then was he lifted over Ida's summit,
and, suddenly, he felt the flight's full joy.
For him the high halls of Olympus opened,
and freely might he walk among the gods.
The chiefest of the glitt'ring cups of nectar
the father, Zeus, entrusted to his hand,
and in a light none but the blest can bear
the world again before his spirit lay.

And blessed was he praised by all earth's children,
and thousandfold in song the burden rings :
Blest is the brow o'er which enthusiasm
has even once swept with its mighty wings.
Blessed the agony to feel the quiver
of strongest yearning under helpless woe,—
then be at last with rush of pinions lifted
to glorious visions over earth below ! "

When he was nearing sixty years of age, Welhaven began to suffer from a disease of the brain which seriously impeded his work. When his wife died he broke down completely. In 1868 he was forced to retire from his position as a University teacher. In November of that year the question of his pension was discussed in the Storting. Sad to relate, with a majority of one vote, the smallest pension only was allowed him. As a compensation, however, the students on the day after this decision went with their banners in procession to Welhaven's house, and he heard

Bjørnson's magnificent song of greeting, spun from the most luminous strands in Welhaven's life, to the festive music of Edvard Grieg :

> *" Lyt nu du ludende sanger ! "*
> (Listen, thou weary, bent singer !)

Welhaven lived on till 1873. It is difficult to overstate his importance in Norwegian literature. He introduced the strictest canons of art, and himself supplied perfect illustrations of his theory. In his poems, execution answers intention. Within his own field he was the master. The following writers, the generation of Bjørnson and Ibsen, have all learnt something from him, partly through the intermediary of Camilla Collett. Bjørnson, it may be said in concluding, with his breadth, his progressiveness, *and* restfulness, somehow touches both Welhaven and Wergeland ; he has done much to heal that deep antagonism in our history.[1]

Welhaven had formulated as his programme of practical romanticism that " the soul of the nation must take possession of itself, investigate and know its memories and treasures of tradition through the times ; only through this knowledge is it prepared to solve the problems which the present puts."

A fresh source had been opened up into Norwegian national life by Asbjørnsen and Moe's raising and publication of the popular folk- and fairy-tales. The discovery was accompanied by an excursion of art (chiefly painting) and learning (chiefly history) into the region of country life, into the depths of the tradition of the main stock of the nation. Besides Moe, Landstad collected popular songs and ballads, and Lindeman national melodies. The ancient architecture and wood-carving of churches and farms were studied, and steps taken to preserve what remained. National history was built up by scholars like P. A. Munch, and painters like Tidemand chose their subjects from the Norwegian farmer's life. The movement seemed to culminate in the national art exhibition at Kristiania (1849), a gathering of the works of the painters Tidemand and Gude—the musicians Kjerulf and Ole Bull—the poets Welhaven, Andreas Munch, and Jørgen Moe. The *pièce de résistance* was that composition, by painters, poet, and musician, *Brudefærden i Hardanger* : " to interpret those fairy-tales clear, which Norway's fjords preserve." At the festival at Kristiania Theater was also sung, in contrast to the gay and glittering Bridal Procession on the Fjord, a song of the lonely mountain dairymaid, who sits in the long Sunday morning and notes when

[1] J. S. Welhaven, *Samlede Værker*, 8 vols., Kbh., 1867–68.

the sun is over the cleft in the mountain-ridge ; for then the church bells are ringing in the valley and the people are gathering on the church green, while she sings her lonely song of longing for autumn and return. This song, *Sæterjentens Søndag*, by Jørgen Moe, set to the music of Ole Bull, is another representative piece of Norwegian art. These *soirées* made a deep impression on the minds of artists and public.

Jørgen Moe may, together with his friend Andreas Munch, the poet of *Brudefærden*, be taken as lyrical representatives of Norwegian romanticism. They show the briefness of the movement, in its aspect of lyrical enthusiasm ; although contemporaries, Moe was one of the first and Munch the last of the school. Moe's connection with fairy-tales is treated in the following chapter. He had been equally interested in a variety of things, long thought of æsthetics as his principal subject of study, and fixed on theology to comply with the wish of his parents. His main interest, however, was in folklore. In 1853 Moe was nominated curate of Sigdal and Krødsherred, woodland valleys to the west of Kristiania. The last thirty years of his life were devoted to his clerical activity. After passing through various livings he was finally appointed Bishop of Kristiansand, and died in that office in 1882.

Early in his career Moe had declared of Norwegian poetry that " it does not rank high, if the demand to a national literature be principally this, that it should reflect in clear and chastened images the life of the people as it unfolds itself according to physical and historical conditions." Moe on this occasion places his hope in Welhaven, which, at a time when the impression of *The Dawn of Norway* was still fresh, was nothing less than rank heresy. At the same time Jørgen Moe set himself to help to make up the deficiency.

To begin with, he followed to some extent Danish models, especially the childlike and idyllic Christian Winther, whose *Træsnit* (Woodcuts) treat idyllic subjects in the metre and the spirit of the folk-song.[1] Moe takes from his models what is congenial to himself—in Winther simplicity, in Welhaven (especially after *New Poems*, 1845) the masterful pictures of folk-life and popular beliefs. Moe's first collection of poems appeared at Christmas 1849. His lyrics never attained any bulk, but they are invariably genuine, rooted in some personal experience. A section of the poems is inscribed *From My Childhood*. Among these is the tale of *Blomster-Ole*, the village idiot, who cared for nothing but flowers :

[1] One of Winther's most renowned ballads, *Henrik og Else*, has been excellently rendered by Whittier (*King Volmer and Elsie*).

"He was but a heathen. God's holy word
no light him gave,
while he trailed his way across the earth
to the waiting grave.

He was not called, when the church-bells rang,
to the wine and bread;
a choir of glowing roses sang
his hope instead."

Some boys had nailed fast the beggar's shoes to the floor of the porch where he had humbly left them, and when he slipped into them again to be off, he fell and was killed. At his burial, girls in white strewed flowers before the coffin, and the boy Jørgen, seeing the poor fellow for the first time gently borne and ungrudgingly given those flowers he had all his days begged, vowed he would write *Blomster-Ole* a song in beautiful words, when he grew up, and the man fulfilled the promise.

It was by regaining his childhood that Jørgen Moe became a poet, and it is in the childlike directness of his manner that he is unique. One has to readjust one's usual vision to see the point in his simple pictures. With sympathetic touch he draws a death-scene in the poor cottar's hut:

"Within, the room is cleared and swept
of dust and cobwebs clean;
on the black hearth are piled up
birch-branches white and green;
with wild briar-roses
so fair and paly red
and green fragrant juniper
the rough wood-floor is spread.

But sée, stretched in the bed lies
dying the old man, Truls,
with clammy sweat on forehead,
with faint and failing pulse!
And by him, on the wooden stool,
old Inger sits, his wife,
in dèath as faithful to him
as she was in his life.

. . . . .

She bends, clutching the bedpost,
her old back, stiff and sore,
close to his mouth her ear lays—
Ah! now he breathes no more.
She rises up to finish
the task long since begun:
'When now his hands are folded—
then, God, my work is done!'"[1]

[1] *Truls og Inger.*

Moe is the first poet who seems to have truly brought out the distinctive element of the Østland scenery : its open vales and hills, its wide-stretching woods. In *A Childhood Memory*, he relates how once, returning from the seter, he saw the wide valley, the broad lake, and the glittering river that wound along, and he yearned toward the fair, sunlit meadows. Then he is held back as by a sigh from the fir trees :

> " Alas the woods and tarns had then for the first time
> sent their melancholy note deep into my mind,
> and from that hour I never can forget it."

And often amid the stir of the city the same whisper comes from afar :

> " Then I am seized with longing for the mountains and woods,
> I hear the tinkling bells and calling horn at eve,
> and the soughing in the tall, bearded fir-trees."

Such compact the country child had made with Nature. Regarding the national note of Moe's writings, Mr. Edmund Gosse has said that " if any one would know what Norway and its people really are, let them read Moe's little lyrical poems." This quality of intimate union with Norwegian Spirit and Nature has been well observed by the Danish Jew, MEÏR AARON GOLDSCHMIDT,[1] who wrote, after visiting Norway (1850), in his magazine *Nord og Syd* :

" The first time I met Moe, I felt pleasantly touched by the quiet warmth which radiated from him and gave his whole being a wonderful sureness. He appeared to me also as one who, like a magnet, everlastingly pointed towards the North, and that could not be made to turn for any time in any other direction. However, when I had come back from an excursion among the mountains, it was as when one suddenly in a foreign land meets an acquaintance from home. It is indescribable how the mountain scenery seizes the mind, and how faithfully Moe expresses it. He was again shy, and even hesitated long before asking me how I had been up among the mountains : when one loves some thing it is unpleasant to hear that somebody else does not like it ; but I chanced to touch on one little feature, perhaps with a note of understanding, and he all at once opened up. If you have felt the soul of a possibly unknown human being respond to yours, and felt a harmony spread around him and you, making every single thing about you warm and homelike—then you may understand how happy an hour I spent."

With Moe's later pastoral activities an ever more devout and religious tone prevades his poetry. He inclines, like Southey, to

[1] Cf. above, p. 72–73.

look at a tree, " and moralize." The birch tree on the bank grows in its own reflected image downward day by day, as a Christian should, and the oak tree in his field is the Old Master who supplies him with the example of deep-rooted steadfastness, drawing from above through its upstretched branches the light, life, and strength ; and so will he too :

" drikke fra oven saften,
lyset, livet og kraften."

Jørgen Moe went on through his life, marking only the sunlit hours. His readers are found both among the most highly educated and in the broad layers of the common people. He was in the best sense of the word a *popular* poet. But the fact that he draws so much from the soil and atmosphere of the homeland, whilst it endears him so much more to his own countrymen, makes Jørgen Moe particularly elusive to the foreigner.

" The interregnum of Andreas Munch " is a name sometimes given to the early fifties before the appearance of Bjørnson's *Synnøve Solbakken* (1857). It implies that this period, when Welhaven had turned to philosophy and Moe to his ministry, was a transitional one without any real leader. Then Andreas Munch was a kind of acknowledged Poet Laureate, a poet of the genteel, mildly elegiac. Although he has not much honour in the present generation, he had in his time.

Andreas Munch was born 1811, the son of the clergyman and author, Johan Storm Munch—one of the more gifted lyrical poets in Norway at the time of the separation from Denmark—and a cousin of the historian, P. A. Munch. He received his first impressions in the gently undulating landscape of Sande, on the Kristiania Fjord. " My awakening consciousness," he writes, " received its first impressions from the quiet vicarage life in this idyllic region, which lies like a little Denmark amidst Norway's grave and stern scenery."

Like Jørgen Moe, he remained a passive member of the " Intelligents-parti." But there is an almost revolutionary breath of freedom over some of his earliest poems, *Ephemera* (1836), containing patriotic songs which still live, and with suggestions that " poetry must be baptized anew, it must throw off all artificial coverings and go naked and rejoicing into the fresh, cold bath of reality : then the sources of life will flow again to heart and eye."

In 1838 Munch's historical drama, *King Sverre's Youth*, obtained the first prize as opening play for the new-built theatre in competition with Wergeland's *The Campbells*. Later on, he also treated

English history, in *Lord William Russell* (1857).[1] Besides, he wrote melodramas in the style of Victor Hugo, with scenes in Spain, the land of guitars and rapiers and violence, and also historical romances in the vein of B. S. Ingemann. Munch as a romanticist is inspired not by popular tales and ballads, but by mediæval romances of bold knights and fair ladies.

After a short time of editorial activity, for which his extreme sensitiveness and lack of humour made him most unsuited, he went, together with his young wife, Charlotte Munch, to Italy, the land of his dreams (1847).

One of his best known shorter poems, *Quo Vadis?* (1848), treats the legend of St. Peter fleeing from Rome and being turned back by a vision of Christ on the Via Appia. The poem is written, as Mr. Gosse says, with considerable beauty of metrical form. There is also a rare union of psychological subtlety and artistic touch in the description of what happened: "And then the vision raised its voice and spoke in Peter's breast."

From Italy he wrote *Billeder fra Nord og Syd*, which are considered the best within our literature of travel; but from the South he longed for the native North, being constantly swung between yearning out and longing home. In 1850 Munch lost his wife, and shortly after his son, and after this the note of melancholy becomes more pronounced than ever in his writings. His *Sorg og Trøst* (Grief and Consolation) was coldly received by Norwegian criticism. It is not the Norseman's way to publish his sorrow. But Munch now, more than ever, became the ladies' poet. He had just been appointed assistant at the University Library, and found consolation within its book-clad walls: "Hail, silent halls, still as the monastery's, but not heavy, closed like them . . . spirits of the past surround me here, their best thoughts testifying that even here on earth the Soul lives on through Death." Later on he advanced to the honours of a lectureship, without duties to lecture (*docens a non docendo*—he was dubbed by Welhaven), and spent much of his time henceforth in travel.

In 1864 Munch had the bad fortune to publish his play *Hertug Skule* at the same moment as Henrik Ibsen's *Kongsemnerne* (The Pretenders) appeared. And here the elder poet was totally eclipsed by the new one.

The last twenty years of his life the most Danish of our poets spent mostly in Denmark, with summer visits to Norway. In 1882 he laid his last verses on the grave of his friend Jørgen Moe,

[1] This play was translated into English blank verse, as was also a previous tragedy, *Salomon de Caus* (1854), by John Chapman, who dedicated his translation of Oehlenschläger's *Palnatoke* to Andreas Munch.

and died two years after, in 1884, near Copenhagen.[1] The following is an attempt to render the quality of pensive melancholy and reconciliation, that peace which Munch himself declared to be the keynote of his writings:

A MOUNTAIN LAKE[2]

"I sat one evening in a little boat
on one of those deep, still, and lonely tarns
that lie—as though an eye with weeping wet—
among Norwegian mountains. Light and warm
the evening sky rose o'er the darkening shores,
and deep into the lake's clear bosom sank,
so that the boat suspended seemed to float
within a wide unfathomed sea of air,
equally deep above it and below—
like Earth's globe hung amid Eternity.
Dead stillness rested over lake and grove!
No bird there was would dwell, would sing its song
within this desolate place at eventide.
No sound romantic flew from hill to hill,
on bright wings flashing, as in Tyrol valleys;
this mountain scene of Norway had no language
except the silent speech of solitude.
In silence did the oarsmen softly dip
their noiseless oars into the cold, clear water.
I felt within this stillness sweetly lost,
as if my soul were slowly melting, gliding
into the dark soul of the mountain-wild
in deep and ever deepening communion."

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[1] Munch translated into Norwegian Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* and the *Idylls of the King* besides Scott's *Lady of the Lake*.

[2] Translated with the assistance of Miss Olive Edmonds. These lines appeared in *The American-Scandinavian Review*.

CHAPTER VI

NATIONAL AWAKENING

IT is a curious fact that modern Norwegian literature up to about 1840 may be studied and understood without much knowledge of Norwegian history or social conditions. It is essentially a cosmopolitan literature, although, owing to reasons given later, its general orientation is more towards the South, that is, towards Denmark and Germany, than towards the West, England and France. The fact that some of our greatest authors, especially Holberg, Wessel, and Wergeland, also had received strong impulses from Western Europe does not alter this general characteristic. But about 1840 there is an awakening of national consciousness, which becomes of the greatest importance to literature. To understand this it is necessary to take a bird's-eye view of the historical conditions of Norwegian society, and then see how these conditions and the general European currents of ideas combined to produce a renewal of Norwegian literature.

I

The history of Norway presents itself in three clearly distinct periods. The first is that which goes from the beginning of the historical era, which we may reckon from the middle of the 9th century, down to the year 1319, when the last king of the line of Harold Fairhair died, leaving his succession to his daughter's son, who later on also became King of Sweden. This was the beginning of the second period, that of unions with Sweden or Denmark or both; this period came to an end in 1814, when the long union with Denmark was broken by the King of Denmark's cession of Norway to the King of Sweden. Norway took this as an occasion for declaring her independence, and this independence she succeeded in maintaining even in the new, personal union with Sweden which she was obliged to accept, so that we are fully justified in dating the new epoch from 1814, although the union period lasted till 1905.

To the national imagination and also to history the first of these periods is one of glory and grandeur, full of persons and events apt to impress themselves upon the mind. There was the long line of

great kings, whose names have become our national symbols, glorious warriors and far-sighted rulers, such as Harold Fairhair, the uniter of the petty principalities into one kingdom and thus founder of the national unity; the three Olavs: the first, Olav Tryggvason, the perfect knight, the second, Olav Haraldsson, the national saint, who converted the country to Christianity, and the third, Olav Magnusson the Tranquil, reformer and builder; further, Sverre the Priest, the popular hero, who successfully resisted the nobility, founding his and his successors' power on the people at large; and finally—to take only the greatest—Haakon Haakonsson the Longlived, under whose reign the kingdom of Norway attained its greatest extension, comprising Iceland, Greenland, the Hebrides, the Shetland and the Faroe Islands, and three eastern provinces which were later lost to Sweden. Then there were the adventurous voyages of the Vikings, and the feats of arms of the Norwegian crusaders. Last, but not least, there were the Sagas and the Eddic and other poems, a literature that for variety, extent, and intrinsic value can bear comparison with any national literature of the Middle Ages.

Compared to this brilliant picture, whose splendour is magnified to the popular mind by the great distance, the long period of unions looks miserable, dismal, and uninteresting. To most Norwegians those five hundred years of our country's life are almost without a history. Its political and military history is bound up with those of other countries, and in a way that is best described in the Dickensian phrase that during all this time Norway was not the hero of her own life-story, at least as that story has been written up to our time. There seems to be an endeavour, however, to re-write the history of Norway during the union period so as to make her the hero of the tale.

Returning to the historical facts, there is no denying that a great many of them go to justify the dismal impression the time has left in most Norwegian minds. Our place in the unions, especially in the long one with Denmark, had originally been one of co-ordination and equality, but gradually it sank to one of real and, at least partially, formal subordination. The voice of Norway in the election of the king was never much more than a formality, and when in 1660 royalty was made hereditary, there was no longer even a pretence of consulting any Norwegian authority as to the way in which the country was governed. The nobility, the only class that might have vindicated the national honour and dignity, was rapidly decreasing in number as well as in power after the havoc made on it during the civil wars in the 12th and 13th centuries, and the remnants were soon swamped by a veritable flood of Danish,

Swedish, and German fortune-hunters. The Church was still to some extent keeping up a national intellectual life, but by the Reformation, which came to us by royal orders and in the Danish language, her might was broken.

The dark period of the union with Denmark came to a sudden end in 1814, when the king of the two countries gave up his right to Norway to the King of Sweden. This cession, which looked like the final humiliation of a nation so often humiliated already, turned out to be the occasion of her national restoration. The abandonment was felt by all as an indignity, and the people rose and declared its independence, gave itself a constitution, the most liberal in Europe, and elected a king. It is true that the king had to abdicate some months later, and that we had to accept a personal union with Sweden; but even in the new union we kept our independence, at least by right, and above all, we succeeded in maintaining our liberal constitution. These facts were the object of an enthusiasm which one would hardly expect in such a moderate and generally easy-going people as the Norwegians. We have already seen how out of this enthusiasm the literature of independent Norway was born.

Intimately bound up with our national history, of which these are the great outlines, is the peculiar structure of Norwegian society. Like other modern societies it is divided into an upper and a lower class, property or birth or both being the principle of division, and in the towns and cities we have no other division than this. But in the country it is, and still more was, otherwise. In addition to what we may call the horizontal division between great freeholders and squires on one hand and small freeholders, copyholders, cottars, and labourers on the other, we find what may be called a vertical division between all these people on one side and the functionaries: the clergymen, the officers, the judges, the bailiffs, and so forth on the other, together with a few persons of some liberal profession. What makes the distinction between this functionary class, as it may conveniently be called, and the country-people proper, the *bønder*, is not so much fortune and birth as language and general education or culture. The history of this difference will also be its explanation, and we must, therefore, give a brief sketch of it. We shall first have a look at what has been called "the peasant culture"—*bondekulturen*—and then at the culture of the other class.

Our mediæval literature, prose as well as poetry, and what is left of our architecture and art of those ages, teach us two things: First, that even from the cruises of the vikings and the introduction of Christianity, Norway had eagerly participated in the

general European currents of ideas, and continually been receiving impulses in art and literature, even in the fashions of clothing and habitation. Especially it had in these respects been in close touch with England, France, and Ireland. Second, that the influences from abroad had been perfectly "digested," if we may be permitted the expression, that is, they had been moulded in a national form and become integral parts of what may truly be termed the national Norwegian civilization. The influences and their moulding had lasted long enough to set up a tradition of creation as well as of reception, a tradition that was kept up as long as the national nobility, clergy, and external commerce were there to act as its mediators.

But during the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries our foreign, and even much of our home trade, got into the hands of the Hanse merchants, whose only interest was money, and who did not mix with the people of the country; thus we were shut off from all sorts of impulses as to fashions and material improvements. During the latter part of this period, and also during the following century, our national nobility was, as we saw, absorbed by an inrush of foreigners, to a great extent people with a rather crude education, but numerous, rich, and powerful enough to be self-sufficient without stepping into and keeping up any national tradition. As at the same time Danish was made the official language of the country, they had not even to learn Norwegian, a circumstance that still further separated them from the people. Still there was the clergy to keep up the national culture. But by the imposition of the Reformation and the importation of Danish parsons and German theology, Norway lost her last regular means of keeping up the traditional intellectual intercourse with Western Europe. And, owing to the language and way of introduction of the Reformation, the new clergy were included in the same feeling of estrangement with the new nobility and functionary class and the new commercial people. And this prevented the opening up of new ways of spiritual intercourse to replace the old ones.

It might have been expected that after such a seclusion the national Norwegian type of culture would have languished and finally died from want of air. To be sure, in more than one respect it did languish, losing among other things its written literature and many forms of higher social intercourse. But it did not die. During the prosperous period of independence, education and social culture had permeated at least a part of the peasant class to a degree that enabled this class to keep up the national type and develop it independently of its natural bearers: nobility, clergy, and officials. The type of culture thus evolved was a very char-

acteristic one, which found its expression in the poetry, music, decorative art and architecture, in the costumes and in the social etiquette of the peasant class, as well as in their language.

Only the unique position and organization of the Norwegian peasant class have made this development possible. The soil is for the most part the property of the man or family that cultivates it, there are no villages, and the farms are separate and far between. The life of the peasant is a strenuous one, everybody has to depend upon himself, and nobody has to account for his doings to anybody else. Thus, once the taxes are paid—and generally they have not been excessive—the peasant is the freest and most independent man one could imagine. Though riches have been rare, there has always been a certain number of well-to-do people with the necessary leisure for cultivating what has been accessible in the way of arts and elaborate forms of social intercourse.

The type of civilization thus developed was, to be sure, a narrow one, a veritable peasant culture, with its shortcomings and oddities, the exchange of ideas mostly being limited to neighbouring counties instead of countries, and the education of the artist and the poet, as well as of their public, being nearly always defective, in spite of the general eagerness to read and to learn. But it had for its medium the national language, and was practically the only mode of civilization accessible to the great majority of the Norwegian people as long as the union with Denmark lasted.

If we now turn to the people on the other side of the line, to the townspeople and functionary class, we find that they, from the very beginning, belong to the general European, or rather Germano-Danish type of culture. Their language, that is, the language that was the medium of their education, was Danish, only with the inevitable colouring of the country where they lived. For manners and customs they took their models from Germany and Denmark, and their notions of art and literature were those reigning in Copenhagen. Impulses from other countries were rare, except with regard to some departments of material culture; in fashions of clothing, of furniture, and of house-building, for instance, there was some influence from western countries, especially from England and Holland. This type of culture had of course a much wider scope; we may say that it covered more or less the whole field of general education. But there was nothing specially national about it, except, of course, what was inevitable from the fact of its living on the soil of Norway.

The people to keep up this extra-national culture were at first only recruited from the immigrants of whom we have spoken, and their descendants. But after the imposition of Danish as the

official language, the introduction of the Reformation, and the downfall of the Hanse power, an ever-increasing number of Norwegians, who wanted to go into commerce or to obtain situations under Government or in the Church, adopted the Danish language and the foreign ways and manners, at least in their official doings and in society. In spite of their Norwegian birth these people were soon completely lost to the national culture. Most of them did their best to rid themselves of everything that recalled their Norwegian origin, changing and deforming even their names to appear foreign. That is why in our towns, up to the present times —there is a change now, but that is quite recent—the family names of Norwegian aspect were quite rare. It is important to notice that the townspeople and functionaries, although possessing the best education of the country and representing it *vis-à-vis* the outer world, never set up a cultural tradition that might be called national, even in the sense of belonging exclusively or principally to Norwegian soil. Their civilization had its centre at Copenhagen, and could only become national by removing this centre, but that was never done as long as the union with Denmark lasted.

This was at the beginning of the 19th century the fundamental division in the Norwegian people from an intellectual point of view. But it was not the only one. When Harold Fairhair had united the separate provinces and petty kingdoms into one kingdom including the whole nation, he had not effaced the antagonisms between the different parts of the people. There was what may be called tribal feelings that for centuries remained stronger than the new national feeling, owing partially at least to the rivalries between the chiefs of the different districts. King Olav Haroldsson, the national saint, seems to have been the first who tried to make his subjects feel first as Norwegians and only next as "trønder, vikværinger, horder, teler," but he only partially succeeded. The sentiment of national unity was greatly strengthened during the reigns of King Sverre and his successors, when the unification and centralization of government was carried much further than before, partly because the resistance of the great nobles had been broken and their ranks very much thinned by the civil wars. But there was still much left of local or tribal patriotism as opposed to the national patriotism, and there might have been a recrudescence of it, had there not been among the people a common feeling of opposition to the foreigners and to the Danish-speaking class. This national class antagonism has no doubt done much evil in dividing the population into two opposed camps; but it may also have done some good in preventing the disintegration of the national feeling that at the beginning of the union period was still in the

making. However that may be, even during all the 19th century there was much left of the old local antagonisms. If we then bear in mind the other divisions inherent in every modern society we understand how the activities of our poets as well as of our politicians must have tended toward the realization of what Ibsen makes " the regal thought of Haakon Haakonsson : " Norway was a kingdom, it shall be a nation." To get a view of the two principal lines along which the progress towards this end has been going on, we must for a moment turn back to the first occasion on which they clearly showed their divergence, namely, the conflict between the Wergeland and the Welhaven parties.

As has been already pointed out, Wergeland was the first to give adequate expression to the aspirations of the new Norway. The feelings expressed were those of newly emancipated youth, and their manifestations were equally youthful, even with Wergeland : the enthusiasm for freedom and national independence knew no bounds, the feeling of conquering strength was unlimited, and there was no end to the glorying in everything national, though real knowledge and sense of it were largely lacking, even among those that cried most loudly. Along with such enthusiasms there were also the other characteristics of youth : lack of judicious criticism, above all of self-criticism, and of the sense of proportion, crudity of manner and of expression, recklessness, and even vulgarity, of conduct. Wergeland's contemporary critics, headed by Welhaven,[1] saw all this, and most of them saw nothing else. Not only were they insensible to the healthy vitality and extraordinary creative force in Wergeland, but they had the same feeling of mistrust towards everything that was national and boldly proclaimed its nationality. What Norway was most in need of, in the eyes of those critics, was self-criticism, not exuberance, and a taming of the natural forces more than their free growth and exercise. They had a feeling as if they were living on a sleeping volcano of national forces, and were afraid lest there should be an eruption which would swallow up everything they loved of art and civilization. And so they tried to muster what vessels were at their disposal, imported or home-made, to receive and contain the flood when it should break loose. This intellectual party, as they liked to call themselves, was in short a party of disbelievers in the proper strength and possibilities of their country ; in spite of the personal courage of the leaders they were a party of fear-stricken men, while their opponents, the followers of Wergeland, were men of faith—and faith generally *is* victorious.

The long campaign between Wergeland and Welhaven, around

[1] Cf. above, p. 58, 75–77.

which so much public interest centred, would have been ridiculous but for its symbolic character: to the parties themselves as well as to their contemporaries it soon became representative of the conflicting ideals of the two tendencies in Norwegian intellectual life. The programmes of the two parties were never clearly formulated, because not conscious, only striving for consciousness. If we try to formulate them it is more because we think some such attempt useful in order to mark out general tendencies, than in any hope of expressing to the satisfaction of everybody the opposite ideals in a conflict that is still going on.

The programme of what was in the time of Wergeland called *norskhetspartiet* (the Norwegianist Party) or *selvstændighetspartiet* (the Independence Party) may be stated thus:

Norway must develop along her proper lines, founding her civilization on national tradition and national characteristics, borrowing freely from abroad whenever she needs it, but only when she needs it and is able to absorb what she borrows, without doing violence to her national organism.

We need hardly point out that this is by no means an unequivocal programme when we go into details: discussion may be raised as to the interpretation of every second word. Especially there will always be dissensions as to what is national tradition and national characteristics, as to when we need borrow from other nations, and as to what may be borrowed without endangering or disfiguring the national organism. But such equivocation being a feature of every party programme, we pass on, without further apology, to that of the other side, which we think may be expressed in the following terms:

Norway, having received her civilization from abroad, but not having assimilated it in a satisfactory way, must organize what she has acquired and complete it from the best sources, be they foreign or national, taking care not to absorb indiscriminately what is offered, neither from without, as she may thereby lose her individuality among the nations, nor from within, as she may thus either break up her cultural organism or isolate herself and consequently stagnate.

We are now going to see how the existence and character of the national Norwegian culture revealed themselves to the literary people—that is, to the townsmen and functionary class.

II

It was Romanticism, and Romanticism in its later stages, that first opened the eyes of educated people in Norway to the importance and value of what was national, and that is why in the literary

history of our country it is always spoken of as National Romanticism (*nationalromantikk*), while in other countries Romanticism has by no means always been national.

Romanticism, as the word is commonly used in the general literary history of Europe, may be defined negatively as a reaction, in literature and philosophy, against what on the Continent is best known as the *Aufklärung*, or enlightenment, and what in England is mostly spoken of as "18th century." Positively it may be defined as a recognition of the mysteries of Nature as well as of the human soul, and of the claims of the human heart. The 18th century was rationalistic and "utilitarian," before the invention of that word, believing in the omnipotence of human reason to clear up every mystery of existence and to make man virtuous by teaching him that it was in his own interest to be virtuous. Those two beliefs —in human reason and in natural virtue—presented themselves to the men of the 18th century as a new discovery, filling them with enthusiasm and confidence in the destinies of the human race. They set about clearing up all mysteries that they were aware of with an eagerness that made them overlook to some extent the claims and aspirations of the human soul. It was from that side that the reaction to the whole trend of thought came.

Romanticism as we view it is above all a recognition of those claims and aspirations. According to it the human soul develops after its own laws, which are neither those of society nor those of pure reason. The task of literature, as well as of art, then was to illustrate this development, and as might be expected from a movement of reaction against what was felt to be the shallowness of 18th-century rationalism and utilitarianism, the new literature and art took for their subjects principally the irrational sides of life and the dark ages of history, when men, it was thought, lived in a more natural way. This natural and unsophisticated life was also to be found among the people that in our own time led the life of nature —that is, among the peasants who had not been in contact with the depraving influences of civilization. From the preceding epoch the romanticists took over the belief in natural virtue. But to them "natural" no longer meant "according to natural reason," but "uninfluenced by civilization and speculation." Being virtuous accordingly lost its former meaning of conforming to enlightened reason, and came to mean the following of one's natural instincts, as far as they could be got at through the layer of conventions under which modern civilization was smothering them. And this is where nationalism eventually stepped into the romantic movement. Man's natural instincts, the romantic theorists argued, are best studied in the expressions given to them by the uncultured and un-

sophisticated—that is, in the art and poetry of the illiterate people. Art was at first neglected, nobody having any knowledge of it. But fortunately some important discoveries of popular poetry had recently been made—we need only mention the names of Macpherson and Percy in Britain, of Herder in Germany. Somewhat later, in the beginning of the 19th century, further discoveries of popular poetry and fiction were made by men such as von Arnim and Brentano, Görres and the Brothers Grimm—all German. The study of this popular literature had a consequence of which the first romanticists had never thought : the discovery of the fundamental character of national differences and peculiarities. From the time when literary people began to realize the significance of this discovery, we may begin to speak of National Romanticism. It was not till Romanticism had reached this stage that it for a short period became the predominant feature of Norwegian literature.

The romantic movement had reached Denmark at a very early stage. In Germany, where it first crystallized into a definite literary school with its doctrine and its partisans, it cannot be said to have become fully conscious of itself till towards the end of the 18th or beginning of the 19th century. As early as 1802 the young philosopher and naturalist Henrich Steffens, a Norwegian by birth, who for some years had been studying in Germany, delivered a series of lectures on the new literature and philosophy in the University of Copenhagen. By these and by personal conversation he was the means of awakening the poetical genius of the young Adam Oehlenschläger, and from the meeting between these two men has been dated a new epoch in Danish literature. If the union between Denmark and Norway had not been broken in 1814, a similar renewal might have come to Norwegian literature as well. As it is we meet with only a few halting attempts at introducing the new ideas with us, and not until much later can we speak of a Norwegian Romanticism.

One of the earliest signs of the coming renewal—if we do not count the works of Maurits Hansen, of whom we have said a few words already—was the publication, in 1833, of *Norske Folke-Sagn* (Norwegian Popular Legends and Myths), by Andreas Faye. Faye, who was a clergyman and who has a name in the history of popular education in Norway, had some knowledge of the works of Görres and of the Grimms, whose personal acquaintance he had made during a visit in Germany. But he was too imbued with 18th-century Rationalism to understand the fundamental ideas of these authors, and when he published his legends and myths, collected with the help of friends among the country clergy and officials, his ends were chiefly utilitarian. By publishing the myths of elves

and fairies and trolls, in which the people still believed, he hoped that just as the trolls were said to burst if they beheld the sun, so these superstitions would wane in the light of publicity. As for the more historical legends of popular heroes and great events he thought they might be of some evidential value, at least as to the people's way of judging events and persons. And he hoped that both myths and legends might furnish poets and novelists with subjects.

Faye's method was founded on the excellent principle set up by the Grimms : that every piece of folklore should be rendered in the form given to it by the people. Only in his application of it he forgot the words " by the people," thus making of the fidelity-principle an injunction to print everything as it was received, whether jotted down by some chance traveller, or put into the official style by some sheriff or clergyman, or into dainty literary style by some amateur novelist or feuilletonist. As might be expected from such a method, the collection is a very heterogeneous one. One will find in it every sort of style, except the popular. The reason why that found no room is obvious : the people spoke another language than that of the collectors and editor, and to publish the tales, or even to write them down, they had to translate them into their own, the literary idiom. But to make such a translation so as to retain the popular and national character and flavour of what was told, required a knowledge of popular expression, a sense of style, and what may perhaps be called a national conscience, which neither the editor nor his collaborators, nor, in fact, anybody at the time, possessed. Those qualities we do not meet with till some ten years later, in the *Norwegian Folk-Tales* as told by Asbjørnsen and Moe. In spite of that capital defect, Faye's *Legends and Myths* went far towards realizing the hopes of their editor, at least in furnishing fit subjects for fiction. Several of the best known poems of the period of National Romanticism have taken their fable from this collection.

The *Popular Legends and Myths* at once attracted some interest in literary circles. They were reviewed by several papers, mostly with more favour than understanding. Most interesting among the criticisms was the one by the young historian P. A. Munch, of whom we take this opportunity of saying a few words, although his work does not belong to the literature of fiction with which we are chiefly concerned here.

Peter Andreas Munch,[1] by his great pioneer work in national history, early became the central figure among those interested in

[1] Born 1812, died 1864 ; from the middle of the 'thirties Lecturer, later Professor, of Geography and History in the University of Kristiania. Principal work, *History of the Norwegian People*, in eight great volumes.

national literature. He was always present where things were being treated that concerned our national history and culture, whether in the past or in the present. He was, in public and in private, the supreme judge of the national value of anything that laid claim to such value, the instigator or the exhorter of all national enterprise in science as well as in literature during the whole period. He was the friend of Welhaven, and the adviser of Asbjørnsen and Moe, of Ivar Aasen and of Landstad, and his influence is traceable in the work of all of them. His historical work, together with that of his colleague RUDOLF KEYSER (1803–65), made it possible to Ibsen and Bjørnson to do what the latter said was the purpose of his historical plays: to vivify in the imagination of the Norwegians the picture gallery of their ancestors. It is therefore only just that he should be remembered when the National Awakening in Norwegian literature is being spoken of, even if his work does not fall within the scope of these chapters.

Faye's *Popular Legends and Myths*, to return to them, could not, as we have seen, satisfy the aspirations towards a national revival in language and literature, but they helped to strengthen and define them. Expression of such aspirations are to be found in some early writings of Wergeland, in articles in the periodical press of the time, and in Welhaven's *Norges Dæmring*. Similar notes, and here stronger and clearer, we have found in some other poems of Welhaven's, published after he had read Faye's book. But a clear consciousness of what was wanted, and an understanding of the way in which it was to be obtained, was not reached till the publication, in 1842–43, of the *Norske Folke-Eventyr* (Norwegian Folk-Tales), by Asbjørnsen and Moe. These simple folk-tales became the centre of the new movement in our literature, and we shall therefore have to speak of them and their authors at some length.

PETER CHRISTEN ASBJØRNSEN was born in Kristiania in 1812. His father was a glazier, and a man of very moderate means. Already as a boy Asbjørnsen was fond of getting out of town and roaming about in the Kristiania valley, alone or accompanying other boys, with the fishing-rod and later with the gun as well. It seems that he took more interest in this life in the open than in his school work, for at the age of fifteen he was sent to a curate in the country to prepare for the matriculation degree. He there had for his fellow-pupil, JØRGEN MOE, the son of one of the biggest farmers of the district, and this was the beginning of the friendship that was to lead to their collaboration on the folklore. After his matriculation Asbjørnsen began to study medicine, but lacking the necessary means to continue his studies without interruption, he had to take

up work as a family tutor ; in this quality he passed several winters in different parts of Eastern Norway, gaining an extensive as well as profound knowledge both of the nature and of the people of that part of the country. We may add, although we are not directly concerned with it here, that he later on gave up medicine and turned to natural history, and became a practical forester and an initiator in the Norwegian peat industry ; as an interested naturalist he was the first to introduce Charles Darwin to a Scandinavian public, only one year after the publication of the *Origin of Species*.

Jørgen Ingebrigtsen Moe was born in 1813 in the parish of *Hole*, in Ringerike, some thirty or thirty-five English miles north-west of Kristiania. His father was one of the foremost men of the district, belonging to a comparatively wealthy and more than usually well-educated family ; he was several times elected a member of the Storting. Jørgen Moe thus inherited the very best traditions of Norwegian peasant culture, and to this he could later add a thorough knowledge of the general culture of the literary classes. His intention was to become a clergyman, but ill-health and religious scruples made him give up the idea of the ministry, although he had by then already completed his theological studies. For a number of years he was a teacher, partly in private families in the country, partly in secondary schools in the capital. From 1849–50 he held a scholarship of Folklore in the University of Kristiania—the first scholarship of this kind in the world. After the publication of the second edition of the *Norske Folkeeventyr* in 1852 he laid aside his folklore studies and took holy orders ; his poetical work has been briefly treated in the preceding chapter.

Both Asbjørnsen and Moe were from childhood familiar with the popular tales, which they had heard chiefly from old servants and working-people, and both felt strongly interested in them. By their life together with nature and with the common people they also had gained an intimate knowledge of the natural and social conditions of the national character and culture that found an expression in these tales. Very early they discovered their common interest in the popular lore, and this was one of the factors that bound them together in a long friendship in spite of great mental and temperamental differences. Moe was a highly sensitive and reflective being, with a turn for self-analysis that at times seems to have been almost morbid. But he also took a great interest in others, and had a talent for understanding even people very unlike himself. He had at the same time a fine sense of humour, and a developed talent for poetry, both creative and critical. Asbjørnsen, on the other hand, was a jovial, generally

rather easy-going nature. Like Moe, he was very impressionable to the beauties of Nature—and this was another bond between them—but he lacked Moe's critical gifts, and his taste was often uncertain. When he allows his pen to run loose, as he sometimes did both in the rendering of legends and in descriptions of scenery or popular life, we may get pictures and passages that are among the truest and most vivid in our literature. But as soon as he stops to reflect, there is always a certain risk of his becoming literary in the bad sense of the word. This, however, is rarely if ever felt in the *Norske Folkeeventyr*, where he always had the guidance of Moe's criticism in addition to the impression left in his mind by the original story-tellers.

There has been some doubt as to whose is the honour of the initiative of the writing down and publishing of the fairy-tales. It now seems certain that Moe was the one who first began writing down fairy-tales and other folklore. As early as 1834 he asks his sister to write down for him a certain fairy-tale, and two years later he writes about the tales to Asbjørnsen. Asbjørnsen had then for more than a year been taking down popular legends and myths at the request of Faye, and for his own account he had also taken down a few fairy-tales. But so far neither of them had any principle as to the best way of publishing the tales—Moe seems to have thought of utilizing them merely as fables for poems and sketches of his own, and Asbjørnsen does not seem to have had any clear idea whatever on the subject. But late in 1836 Moe came across the *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen* of the Brothers Grimm, and only then did he grasp the scientific and national value of the tales. He at once understood that the only way of editing them without lessening that value must be by following the principle laid down by the Grimms: that every piece of folklore should be rendered in the form given to it by the people. How this principle was to be applied in the special case of the Norwegian fairy-tales was a matter of some difficulty, and it appears that Moe had reached no definite conclusion on that point when, in the spring of 1837, he proposed to Asbjørnsen that they should edit together what tales they had found or could find.

How this problem weighed upon Jørgen Moe's mind, and also how important the whole matter had become to him, we may understand from a poem which he sent to Asbjørnsen in the autumn of this year, 1837, when he at last saw the way of recreating to the educated classes, and to all the people, the glories of the fairyland of folklore. The poem is called, *I have found the Key* (*Jeg har Nøklen*), meaning the key to the hidden treasures; there is an intensity of feeling about it which one should hardly have

expected such an impersonal matter as a collection of popular tales to have inspired:

> "... Ah, I have found the key! Intently viewing
> the journey's end that I have been pursuing,
> a new creation of that world takes place
> from my heart's deep, as heaven out of grace."

The peculiar difficulties of Asbjørnsen and Moe's task were mainly two. The language in which the stories were told was not a literary language, had no unity, no orthography, and was spoken only by what the literary people considered the uneducated folk. And the literary language of the country—in writing identical to Danish, or nearly so—had by this time nothing that could be called a national style, not even a popular style as far as Norway was concerned. Only two ways of editing the popular tales seemed open to the two friends: either to publish the tales simply as they were told, maintaining the differences of dialect and style, or to translate them into the literary Danish language. But in the first case their book would have little chance of ever being read, there would be no apparent unity to show the really national characteristics, and the individuality of the incidental narrators would get a prominence out of proportion with their rôle in the creation of the tales. And in the second case most of the national characteristics of the traditional lore would simply be lost.

Asbjørnsen and Moe chose neither of those ways. Their idea, the idea that was to mark a new epoch in Norwegian literary history, was to create a new style within the bounds of the literary language, a style that would retain all, or failing that, as much as possible, of what was truly national as well as popular in the people's tales. Thus they hoped to retain the true character of the traditional lore even through a translation into another idiom.

By their intimate knowledge of the people's culture and language, by their sense of style, and by their sure national instinct, Asbjørnsen and Moe succeeded in realizing their genial idea. And they spared no effort that they might succeed in their difficult task. They listened again and again to the best narrators to imbue themselves with the very spirit of popular epic, they criticized again and again their own and each other's work until they had reached the utmost degree of perfection of which they were capable, and they severely rejected everything provincial or personal about the tales that were to pass for the expression of the Norwegian people itself.

Asbjørnsen and Moe were not very long in discovering that the subject-matter of the fairy-tales was mostly international, to be

found in the tales of a great number of peoples, both in and out of Europe. What gave them their national value was the manner in which they were told, the way in which the different traits of the story were used, some of them being spun out to long yarns, others being neglected or distorted. These things, together with what is more technically called the style of the stories—the construction of the phrases, the choice and the use of the words, and such things —is what characterizes him who tells a story. But he who told to Asbjørnsen and Moe the *Norske Folkeeventyr* was no single man, but may, with a few restrictions, be said to be the Norwegian people itself. By being transmitted from generation to generation the popular tale had dropped off nearly everything that was accidental, individual, or personal, to retain only what was really fundamental and national. To many of the best narrators the tale they told was a thing too much consecrated by tradition to be altered or in any way meddled with by any individual possessor—he or she was only to pass it on as they had received it. It therefore often happened to Asbjørnsen and Moe that when they had the same tale told two or more times, it was given in practically the same words both or all the times. Their work, then, consisted in translating what they received into the literary language, so as fully to preserve its national and popular characteristics, without breaking up the organism of the language they were translating into. In spite of the great difficulties of such a task they succeeded so well that the *Norske Folkeeventyr* mark, and even by the contemporaries was felt to mark, a new epoch in Norwegian style.

The first samples of the tales, retold according to the principle agreed upon, appeared as early as 1837, in the Christmas number *Nor*, and aroused at once considerable interest in literary circles. Two years later the editors had found a publisher for a whole volume of tales, and in the spring of the following year, 1840, a prospectus was sent out. But there were so few subscribers that the publisher withdrew. Next year they were fortunate enough to find another, and towards the end of the year the first part of the book was published, the three next parts following in 1842, 1843, and 1844. By this time what had previously been published was out of print, and so publication was stopped until the editors should have revised both the earlier parts and what was still left. For the new edition one of them, Jørgen Moe, was to write a preface on the historical and scientific meaning and import of the tales, and also critical notes to each of them to show their relations to those of other peoples. But the revision as well as the introduction and critical apparatus required more time than the editors had expected, so that the new edition did not appear till 1852. It

contained about twice as many tales as the first, and the notes and introduction were such that they laid a solid foundation for Norwegian folklore science,—which, especially in these last thirty or forty years, has played a prominent part among what has sometimes been called our national sciences, the historical and philological ones.

The bold innovation of style that the *Norske Folkeeventyr* presented was felt at once by the literary people, and was, to a great extent by the influence of P. A. Munch, generally applauded. Welhaven, who was then the arbiter of taste, after some hesitation decreed that the Folk-Tales was "a splendid book." But such was not the opinion of everybody. Camilla Collett, Henrik Wergeland's sister, and her husband, Professor Peter Jonas Collett, protested in the name of good taste, and even undertook to show by example how popular tales might be rendered without vulgarity. The attempt was not very successful, at least in the eyes of posterity. Its chief interest to us is the admirable example it affords of the change in taste as well as in style brought about by the work of Asbjørnsen and Moe. Jørgen Moe replied to the attack, maintaining that in all poetry (folk-songs and tales included) intuition is expression, that the matter can only create its own form and take life from it. He, too, gave an example by telling the story of the girl who spoke only with half her mouth, as an allusion to the half-hearted way in which the Colletts had rendered the popular tale.

Even before the publication of the second edition of the *Norske Folkeeventyr*, there had appeared several other books of similar national tendency, showing that the tide was now turning. In 1844 there was a new edition of Faye's *Norske Folke-Sagn*, with some additions. The manner of rendering the legends is the same as it was, but a preface tells us that if the editor is still sinning, it is no longer wilfully, but from infirmity: he expressly recognizes the superiority of Asbjørnsen's rendering of the legends, of which some specimens had been published. In the following year, 1845, appeared Asbjørnsen's *Norske Huldreeventyr og Folkesagn* (Norwegian Fairy-Tales and Popular Legends). Here the tales and legends are set in a frame of descriptions of natural scenery and popular life and types. Asbjørnsen makes us the companions of his wanderings among the country people, introduces us to his narrators, more or less original people for the most part, such as hunters, beggars, conjurers, and wise women, and makes them tell us what stories they have got. This way of presenting the popular tales and legends naturally makes Asbjørnsen adopt another kind of style than that of the *Norske Folkeeventyr*. There everything local

and individual had to be avoided or discarded if the truly national characteristics were to appear clearly, while here, in the *Huldreeventyr*, such things were even necessary, to keep the picture in the frame. But this inevitably lowered the general tone of the stories, as they were all, or nearly all, supposed to be told by people of the very poorest classes. The style of the *Norske Folkeeventyr* was sustained, severe, and pure, in spite of its perfectly oral character. That of the *Norske Huldreeventyr og Folkesagn* is loose, uneven, and now and then it verges on the vulgar. It is national, to be sure, but Vinje was perfectly right in pointing out that if this was to be the only national style, as some people would have it, then Norwegian nationality would be kept out, just as it had been, from all the higher intellectual life of the nation.

Leaving alone the intricate question of the general significance of folklore, we should like to point out a few of the features which distinguish our tales and legends from those of some other peoples.

The Norwegian *Eventyr* and *Sagn*, with their meagre, straight simplicity as though cut in wood, are very far apart from the rich Hindu tales and the arabesque designs of the *Arabian Nights*. They seem cold compared to the *gemütliche* German *Märchen*, and also to the sometimes sentimental Swedish ones with their gilded armour, " tears burning on cheeks," and " longing across the sea, whose waves go freely from land to land." They also sound harsh after Hans Andersen's mildly radiant tales (which of course are not folk-tales in the ordinary sense, but creations of his own). It is in the qualities of conciseness and humour that ours score. The characters stand clearly out and move about, and especially the comical figures are alive.

The scenery and general atmosphere are unmistakably Norwegian. The dark forests with little green glens where to rest, the heavy mountain overhanging the castle of Soria Moria (transplanted there from islands in the Arabian Sea), the petty king on the doorstep giving directions to his farm-labourers like any old patriarch of a farmer, all loudly proclaim their Norwegian nationality.

The most characteristic type of our *Eventyr* is *Askeladden* (Ashiepattle), the youngest son who is lying about the fireplace all day long and is thought a good-for-nothing by everybody, but who in reality is the sharpest of all and without fail wins the king's daughter. In the story of Askeladden eating faster than the giant (*troll*), Moe sees a direct connection with the Old Norse myth of Thor visiting Utgards-Loke. The folk-tale actually suggests greater antiquity than the (presumably) late myth, for in the latter the god only comes off as the second best.

Another frequently occurring and very characteristic figure,

which may appear shocking at first sight, is *Fanden* (the Devil). In our tales he is never the terrible antagonist of the Scriptures. He would present a falling-off indeed from Milton's Satan. *Fanden* is a fool and a coward who is constantly taken in and roughly handled. The old rooted conception of the stupid troll has worked together with the Norwegian penchant for joking with sinister things. He is especially served out in the story of the Master-Smith (" The Smith whom they dared not let into Hell "), a masterly Norwegian welding together of various bits of legends scattered in European tales.

Before passing on to the other phases of the national awakening we should like to mention some of the artists who have contributed most to make Asbjørnsen and Moe's *Eventyr* one of the most popular books of our literature : HANS GUDE, who has given such sympathetic pictures of the Østland, with clear and delicate lines and varying light-effects—ERIK WERENSKIOLD, whose realistic scenes from daily life in and about farm and cottage, has shown the townspeople the peasant as he looks in his everyday guise—TH. KITTELSEN, whose strange fantasy makes the most grotesque troll look out quite naturally from rocks and tree-stumps in the dusky firwoods or poke up their heads in mysterious tarns, or shows us the golden cloud-castles at sunset over darkened hills, luring us on to *Soria Moria Castle*—and, finally, O. SINDING, more of an all-round artist, less typically Norwegian, illustrating best perhaps the element of wonder common to the fairy-tales of all nations.

Asbjørnsen and Moe's discovery and creation of a national and popular Norwegian style very soon began to exert its influence on our literature. As early as 1844, that is even before the publication of Asbjørnsen's *Huldreeventyr*, Welhaven sent out his first series of national ballads, or " romances," as they are called in Norway. Most of them take their fable from Faye's *Legends and Myths*, but it was not until after the publication of Asbjørnsen and Moe's tales that Welhaven succeeded in taking the true national note, as we may see from an earlier attempt in the same line. But these ballads have been treated in the preceding chapter, so we only make this mention of them here.

The general Romanticism of the time, which had been groping for self-consciousness in Norwegian literature almost since the separation from Denmark, was only arriving at its first successes in the poetry of Welhaven and Andreas Munch, when the national tendencies found their way into our literature in the manner we have here tried to set forth. In the following years these tendencies were strengthened by other impulses, which definitely

led the stream of Romanticism into the national channel, and of which we must say a few words.

The first of these impulses came from the discovery of the unity of the Norwegian dialects and of their direct descent from the Old Norse, the language of the Eddas and the Sagas. The discovery was made by IVAR AASEN, a peasant's son from Sunnmøre in Western Norway. As his scientific and poetic work will receive a fuller treatment in another chapter, we here only mention that the first results of Aasen's long researches, his *Grammar of the Popular Language of Norway*, was published in 1848. It was greeted with enthusiasm by P. A. Munch, by whose authority it became a mighty stimulant of national self-feeling.

A second impulse came from another discovery, that of the Norwegian popular poetry. As late as 1840, and even later, the educated classes of the country knew nothing of the existence of such a thing. Henrik Wergeland himself, with all his keen interest in everything national as well as in everything popular, had no idea of it. When asked by a Swedish friend, the authoress Frederikka Bremer, for some specimens of folk-songs from Norway, he had to reply that he knew none, though he supposed they must exist somewhere.

In the same year, 1840, Jørgen Moe published a little volume of popular songs. Although born in the country and a collector of folklore, he thought there were very few folk-songs left, and so he filled up his little book with much that was not popular in the sense we give to the word when we speak of popular ballads and the like. But his book roused the interest of at least one person who knew more about the popular poetry. OLEA CRØGER, who was the daughter of a clergyman in Telemark, and had grown up among the people and their poetry, was at once struck by the idea of the value of the folk-songs, and set about collecting all that she could find. She addressed herself to Moe that he might help her to have it edited, but various difficulties came in the way of a collaboration between them, and finally Miss Crøger handed over her manuscripts to M. B. LANDSTAD that he might have them published.

MAGNUS BROSTRUP LANDSTAD (1802–80), a clergyman and the son of a clergyman, had passed his childhood and youth since 1811 in Telemark, and after a few years of study and of work in other parts of the country, he had returned to Telemark as a vicar, first of Kviteseid, then, from 1839, as his father's successor in the neighbouring parish of Seljord. He had thus acquired an intimate knowledge of the country-folk and their lore, and he had also, even before Miss Crøger, begun to write down some of the ballads

and songs that he heard among the people. Now he set about collecting systematically everything he could, and was surprised to find much more than anybody had suspected. His published collection comprises no fewer than 122 ballads and some 500 *stev* or separate stanzas of lyric, humoristic, or satiric contents.

But many difficulties were to be overcome before the ballads could be laid before the public. Their language was not a literary one with an established orthography and system of inflections. Many words were transmitted in such an antiquated form that neither the singer nor the collector could understand them. Worst of all, many songs were fragmentary, or to be found in two or more different versions, necessitating a restitution, or at least a choice between the versions—for hardly anybody at the time thought of a complete scientific edition giving " everything that was found and as it was found."

It took Landstad several years to collect and collate the songs, and to decide upon the principles of their publication. Not possessing any thorough knowledge himself either of the Old Norse, or of the popular dialects outside of Telemark, or of the studies of popular poetry which had been made in other countries, he at every step had to ask the advice of people better acquainted with those subjects than himself. The advice being often contradictory, the result was often a compromise between different principles. P. A. Munch, for instance, would have him adopt an orthography and inflectional system that made the language appear as uniform and as like the Old Norse as possible, while Ivar Aasen would have him keep faithfully to the tradition in its living form ; the result was that the ballads appeared in modern language, but apparelled in an armour of mute consonants and dead inflections that sometimes would hide the dialectic differences, thus making it difficult or even impossible to locate them by means of Landstad's text.

It is clear that a book edited on such a mess of principles, if we may use that expression, could not satisfy the claims that must be made to a scientific edition. When Landstad's *Norske Folkeviser* appeared in 1853, the book was severely criticized by the Danish folklore student Svend Grundtvig, who had just begun the edition of the popular ballads of Denmark that was to become the standard of all such editions. But whatever were the faults of the editing, the *Norske Folkeviser* gave to national feeling and to national poetry an impulse that can hardly be overestimated. They confirmed and brought into clear consciousness the national characteristics that Asbjørnsen and Moe's *Eventyr* had first revealed to the literary world : the love of the adventurous, wedded to a

strong sense of life's realities; the strength and the simplicity of the emotions and of the passions; a more or less avowed contempt for the prudent and the philistine, with admiration of the cunning, even if immoral; a gift as well as a love of dramatic expression and of objective representation; in short, the same traits that we meet with in the ancient Sagas, and which Bjørnson and Ibsen were soon to revive in their national dramas. In these dramas and in Björnson's other early works National Romanticism reached its height, and at the same time its close. But before passing to them we must give a brief account of the work of a writer who in the middle of the period remained practically uninfluenced both by Nationalism and by Romanticism.

CHAPTER VII

CAMILLA COLLETT

IN Norwegian history Camilla Collett represents two important innovations: in our literature she is the first to introduce the *roman à thèse*, and in politics she is our first champion of the emancipation of women. To her, literature was little else than a means to fight for her ideas, such as life had formed them for her. We are, therefore, going to speak first of her life and afterwards of her writings. Whatever may be said against such a division in other cases, in hers it seems quite justified. For of Camilla Collett we may say that she spent the first half of her life in gaining experience, which in the latter half she founded her writings upon, for other sufferers of her sex to benefit by it.

JACOBINE CAMILLA WERGELAND, a sister of Henrik Wergeland, was born on the 23rd of January 1813 at Kristiansand, where her father was then still living. Her second name, Camilla, the one which she always used, was given her in remembrance of her mother's favourite part when an active member of the Dramatic Society of the little town—a trait which serves to characterize her parents' romantic ideas.

Camilla was four years old when her father was appointed rector of Eidsvoll, the place where he had been as a member of the Constituent Assembly of 1814, and where he was to remain for the rest of his life.[1] It was thus, in the lovely and peaceful scenery of Eidsvoll, that Camilla Wergeland passed most of her childhood and early youth.

Camilla was brought up in company with her brothers—an unusual thing for a girl at that time—until they were sent to school at Kristiania. She was by nature loving and tender, with a tinge of melancholy, which in her case does not imply weakness. She was shy, and loved being alone, but did not shut herself up in her room to brood and to dream: she went for long rambles in the woods and fields, or sought out some one of her favourite recesses in order to read or to write letters to her friends—letter-writing being an

[1] Cf. p. 52.

occupation of which she was very fond all her life. The description she gives of one of her heroines is clearly her own conception of herself as a young girl: "She possessed that slender grace of figure which indicates that it will never develop into stoutness. Her movements were light and swift like those of a child of Nature. With the years she endeavoured to acquire more calm and quiet, but it was no little difficulty for her to learn to walk instead of running, a tendency which always clung to her from her childhood rambles in the woods and fields. Seeing this swift, gliding gait, one had to think of the wagtail, which unwillingly follows the ground as if always on the point of rising from it."

Living so much and so intimately with Nature, she was early struck by the divergence from it shown by the ways and notions of grown-up people. This caused a painful conflict within her between what was spontaneous and what others had taught her, so that sometimes, when moved to joy by some sight of beauty, she would be seized by a misgiving and anxiously ask herself: "But is not this sin?"

From her fourteenth to her sixteenth year Camilla Wergeland was sent to live at Christiansfeld in Sleswig at a girls' school or institute of the Moravian Brethren. The school was a paragon of the negative form of education, whose chief concern is teaching what one must *not* do. The positive gain which Camilla Wergeland —whose amount of knowledge at her entrance was far above the average—derived from this institute, seems limited to a taste for the poetry of Schiller, and some acquaintance with the writings of Goethe and the German Romantic School. In her recollections she severely criticizes the education given at Christiansfeld, although she liked the people better than their principles.

Shortly after her return to Norway at the age of sixteen, Camilla Wergeland made her appearance in the society of the capital. Her beauty was such as to be the occasion of legends forming around it — and of a freshness and purity that won her the hearts of all who knew her. Her grace and elegance of manner and of speech, her amiable and quick wit, and her extraordinary stock of knowledge combined to make her one of the persons most in view as well as most courted in the narrow society. The memoirs we have got from that time are unanimous in this, and there is still an oral tradition testifying to her beauty and fame.

But her very qualities were to become fatal to her, attracting as they did all the young men of the upper circles of the capital, and among them WELHAVEN, who was to exercise a decisive influence on her life. In a well-known poem, *Soirée-Billeder*

(Soirée-Pictures), Welhaven describes the impression the young girl made upon him :

"There was a pause in the soirée
when she, the parson's daughter, came,
and gossip, passing with the teacups,
was silenced by her airy tread.
This elfin beauty of sixteen
was fostered in the verdant valleys,
and in our hibernating stupor
we were amazèd at her spring.

Words are too poor when 't comes to painting
the fascination of her grace.
. . . . . .

But what most strongly struck one's fancy,
though by most people never seen,
was a peculiar charm, so lofty
and at the same time so naïve.
Among the brilliant assembly
she wore a crown invisible,
for she alone walked in an aura
of mild and graceful womanhood."

It was during the winter 1829–30 that Camilla Wergeland made the acquaintance of Welhaven. He was then between twenty-one and twenty-two, she between sixteen and seventeen. In spite of his youth and of his extreme poverty he was very much in view in the capital, owing to his wit and to his charming manners—which, by the way, were not always so—and also to his great personal beauty. Their position in society naturally seemed to push them towards each other, and very soon there sprang up between them a friendship tinged with love. Just about the same time began the long and bitter conflict between Henrik Wergeland and Welhaven. It is therefore not to be wondered at if the Wergeland family looked with disapproval on the friendship between Camilla and the leader of their enemies. The intercourse between them, however, was not prohibited, tolerance forming a constant part of the principles of the Wergelands, if not always of their practice. But Camilla felt that she was being suspected, and therefore avoided meeting Welhaven, except in society and under circumstances where the family would know nothing about it. They also wrote to each other—with precautions. On her side there was love in the matter from the very beginning, and she was not long in discovering the fact. But for a young woman at that time to confess being in love, whether it was done explicitly or implicitly, was considered a crime of *lèse-virginité*, as one critic has put it, and Camilla

Wergeland had to check her feelings. To her sensitive and passionate nature this forced restraint soon became a very torture, and the way in which Welhaven met her did not make things better. She was from the very first overawed and fascinated by his personality; he was to her a sort of demon or demigod, though generally the latter. It was only subsequently that she was able to look upon him as a quite human being, and not until she had discovered, with wonder mingled with delight, that he too had some human weaknesses, though of the noblest and most honourable kind. She then thought, and his words and manner towards her certainly justified her in thinking, that she understood him better than anybody else, and that she of all women was best able to make him happy. She loved him with all her soul, and in some way he got the positive certainty that she did.

How then did he respond to this love? From the letters and fragments of letters and diaries that have been published, it is not easy to give a definite answer, but one thing seems pretty clear: that he never fully returned it. He was attracted, no doubt, by her beauty and grace and wit, and still more by the intelligent sympathy she showed him, even in the conflict between himself and her father and brother. Welhaven seldom met with real sympathy in those days: his enemies hated and detested him, his friends admired and almost worshipped him, and all alike feared him. It seems that for a time at least Camilla Wergeland was the only person who really understood him. She was the only one to see that he fought not out of a perverse hatred of his own nationality, as his enemies said, nor out of vanity or from love of fighting, but because of his intense longing for beauty and harmony and serenity, and because the literary and political and social manners, or rather want of manners, of the young and youthful patriots jarred upon his sensitive and art-loving nature. No wonder, therefore, that he should welcome this sympathy with all his heart. He warmed to and rejoiced in it, and was also thankful for and wanted to keep it. But the love that was at the heart of it he never returned, nor, as it seems, was able to return. She for a long time believed in his love and expected him to declare it to her. In his letters he speaks much of the sympathy that unites them, and his words often vibrate as with a subdued passion. He also speaks of this passion, but only to explain why he feels obliged to quench it. He never pronounces the decisive words: I love you! Never commits himself irrevocably, always keeps open a way of retreat. And when finally he told her that they never could be more than friends, he did it in the words of a despairing passion which external circumstances had forced to abandon every hope. There is in his

letters a note of impatient hesitation, of provoking reticence, which hardly deserves another name than duplicity, and which in the long run quite tore her to pieces and undermined her psychical as well as her physical strength. Her father, who saw that her health was failing, took her with him on a voyage to Paris in the summer of 1834, and with good results. She returned in the autumn much strengthened, though not fully restored in health.

When she left, her acquaintance with Welhaven was more than four years old; how long the cat-and-mouse play had been going on we do not exactly know, but it had lasted a considerable portion of those years. No wonder that she was tired and wanted to break off. But breaking off was no easy matter. After her return they soon met again in society, spoke to each other, and before long their relations were the same as they had been before her voyage. When she was staying at home at Eidsvoll he wrote to her, and she wrote back, with fresh hopes stronger than ever. In one of his letters—from the spring of 1835—he, speaking of their friendship, says that he thinks it the duty and the right of both to be quite open about their feelings. She, acting on what she took to be a plain hint, with much delicacy wrote back and told him the nature of her sentiments, happy in the certainty that they were shared by him. She has herself told us of the day when his answer to that letter arrived:

"One evening in the beginning of June, heavenly mild and full of fragrance, of life and light, I sat on the bench under the big apple-tree in our garden. The whole path was spotted with white from its petals. I was sitting in deep reflections. I thought of a miracle that lay before me. I said to myself that this year all the white narcissi were healthy, not one of them suffering from consumption, as nearly all of them did last year." She goes on describing how all Nature breathes joy and happiness, and how the bird in the top of the tall birch sings his blissful song. "But all at once it dropped into long, trembling, subdued notes, so sad and heart-sick as if it knew of some great sorrow. And it is no use that all the grasshoppers in the field below unanimously say: tittle-tattle—and that the humble-bees hum: mere fancy . . . the little bird in the top of the birch gets sadder and more plaintive still; he knows better: there *is* a sorrow lurking somewhere. And my soul was like one of the buds, so entirely ready for opening, not impatient, but quiet and still as they: they patiently wait till the rain shall come. Yes, my soul was rich and full then, it was heavy with hope and all life's sweetness.

"Then there came a letter, it was even rose-coloured, as letter-paper often was in those days. When I had read it and it had

slipped from my hand on to the gravel, it looked as innocent as if it were a petal from the tree among the other flower-petals. And for all that it had been weighty enough to crush a hope for the whole of this life. During this hour was torn to pieces a bond between Nature and myself that was never to be healed, and I no more loved it as before."

The letter from Welhaven that so crushed her hopes has never been published in full, but what we know is sufficient to account for its effects. It pretends to be an explanation why they can never be united, keeping at the same time to the old note of subdued passion. But it looks as if he had quenched his beginning passion at so early a stage that he never really knew whether it was love or no. The principal cause was in their own natures, they had too many coincident qualities that would make it impossible for them to live up to the claims of society! He ends by offering her a warm friendship, and by hoping that the old darkness will be dispelled for ever.

The thing might seem easy enough to him who did not love and who probably never had loved. But we cannot wonder that this letter almost made her mad with grief, or that she could not accept his friendship when she could not have his love. Still it was not the end. They met again in society, he hinted at recent relapses into his old passion, and there were more rose-coloured letters. In one of them, written after a short trip to Copenhagen, he begins by telling her that she has ever been present to his thought while abroad, and he ends with a poem on two flowers that, although separated by their roots, bent their heads together so as to unite at least in their tears. And after the poem only the words: "Good-bye, my dear, dear Camilla." On the back of this letter, which has since been published, she wrote: "Might not such letters drive one mad? Always a tantalizing confession, ending in a farewell. . . . Our tears never did run together, alas, I wept them alone."

At last, after almost another year of these relations, she resolves to put an end to them, and as she does not feel strong enough to avoid him if she is to remain at home, she leaves the country and does not return till almost a year later. In Hamburg, where she had gone to stay with some friends, she became engaged to a Swedish diplomatist, and only then did Welhaven cease writing to her. The engagement was soon broken, but there was no renewal of her relations to Welhaven, and they did not meet again till more than twenty years later, and then at the instigation of Fru Welhaven.

In Hamburg, Camilla Wergeland made the acquaintance of several excellent and interesting people, and acquired an extensive knowledge of contemporary German literature. In a certain

measure she recovered from the wound of her heart, but it did not quite heal, in fact, it never did. She kept a diary during the years after her break with Welhaven and her return from Hamburg, of which some fragments have been published. From these we can see how she brooded over her pain and how the slightest occasion was enough to reopen the imperfectly cicatrized wound.

A little more than two years after the cessation of her correspondence with Welhaven, Camilla Wergeland secretly engaged herself to Peter Jonas Collett, a young man of good family, Master of Law, and her junior by some eight months. She was then a little more than twenty-six, he a little less. They had known each other for some four years, but it was only during the last year that it had come to any intimacy between them. She was at first only touched by his discreet and unselfish attentions, then she learned to appreciate his high intellectual qualities and his noble character. But it was only after long struggles against the ghost of her former passion that Collett succeeded in winning her. She submitted to him her correspondence with Welhaven and her diaries from the years of their acquaintance, so that he might know all about it. With a rare patience he went through it all, and with incomparable delicacy and also with much firmness he succeeded not only in winning her hand, but in making the years of their marriage the happiest time of her life. It is possible that the constant strain—for such it seems to have been—was too much for him, and that it was one of the causes that made him succumb to the attack of influenza from which he died, in 1851. He was then only thirty-eight years old, but had been professor of Law for some years already.

When her husband died, Camilla Collett was left with the care of their four boys, in narrow circumstances and with rather few friends. The career which she then saw, as "a sort of salvation," was the literary one, upon which she had entered under the guidance of her husband. At his instigation she had tried her hand at several short feuilletons, which were published in *Den Constitutionelle* (The Constitutionalist), a daily paper of Kristiania to which her husband was for many years a more or less regular contributor. These stories and sketches show us a writer with a clear and elegant style, but lacking as yet the force and originality necessary to bring out her characteristic traits. In later life she did not think very much of them, and considered as her real début in literature her only novel, *Amtmandens Døttre* (The County Sheriff's Daughters), which was published in 1855.

Before speaking of her work, however, we shall tell the little that is left to be told about her life. The first years after her

husband's death she was chiefly occupied with the education of her children. Later, when her husband's and her own relatives had adopted two of them, and the other two no longer required constant attention, she spent most of her time in study, in travel, and in literary production. Like most persons who feel deceived by life—and that was her case, in spite of the years of relative happiness with Collett—she was discontented and difficult to please, and never could stay for any length of time in one place, whether living in her own house or flat, in a boarding-house, or with some friend or relative. More than twenty years of her life she spent in foreign capitals—Paris, Rome, Munich, Berlin, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. Her literary activities during all this period of her life, and especially during her last twenty-five years, were entirely consecrated to " the emancipation of woman." What those words implied to her we shall presently see. For long years she felt as if she were quite alone in this struggle, a feeling that made her give to her books such titles as *From the Camp of the Dumb* and *Against the Tide.*

But she lived long enough to see the tide turn, and to see her work recognized both in literature, in politics, and in social intercourse. At the occasion of her eightieth anniversary, in 1893, she was celebrated as the greatest authoress of Norway, and as the moral, if not political, leader of the emancipation movement, not only in Norway, but in all the Scandinavian countries. In the early morning a procession of women marched under her windows, and in the evening all the students, female and male, came with torches. There was an official dinner at which Henrik Ibsen took her to the table. Such homage Camilla Collett was not used to. She was surprised and touched, and compared herself to the old Gokstad viking ship which had been brought to light.

She was in good health to her last, only very short-sighted. In consequence she was run over several times in the streets. She had the same disregard of the doctor's art as had her brother. She loved the open air, and believed in it ; in her eighty-first year she still bathed in the Kristiania Fjord.

Camilla Collett died on the 6th of March 1895, amidst the sympathy and gratitude of all the nation. A statue of her, by Norway's greatest sculptor, Gustav Vigeland, was unveiled on the occasion of the centenary of her birth ; it is to be seen close by the royal palace in Kristiania.

The works of Camilla Collett may be roughly divided into three parts, a division corresponding not only to their contents but also to their order of publication. The first part consists of works of

fiction, what we in Norway call *skjønliteratur*, the second part of her recollections, and the third of polemical and propagandist writings. The division is, however, only a rough one, for we everywhere find definite moral purpose, personal memories, and striving after artistic effect.

As we have already mentioned, her first publications were the stories and sketches in *Den Constitutionelle*. In the very first of them she argues against the oppression of women by social etiquette. The following articles are sketches from peasant life, partially occasioned by and protesting against the descriptions Asbjørnsen had given as framework of his popular legends and tales; of the opposition of the Colletts to Asbjørnsen's style we have already spoken.[1] Some of the other articles are still interesting as good descriptions of the life of the country functionaries, and as acute criticisms of society life, both in the country and in the capital.

But all those things are little more than experiments which only imperfectly show us the great qualities of the author. These are to be sought in her chief work, her great novel *Amtmandens Døttre*, published, as we said, in 1855.

The County Sheriff's Daughters consists of several distinct stories running parallel. The principal one is the love story of the sheriff's youngest daughter, Sophie, and of George Cold, the sheriff's secretary. The other stories are those of the love and marriage of the other sisters, told with the purpose of setting forth Sophie's misfortune as the common lot of women.

George Cold is a young man of the educated class, but without relations, so that only his personal qualities have opened to him the most exclusive society of the Norwegian capital. The men envy him, the women adore him, and he has made more than one conquest among them, has even been engaged once or twice. But intimacy with women has opened his eyes, he thinks: he has never met any woman whose intelligence or character were worthy of him, and now he believes himself immune from any attack from the other sex. So minded he arrives at the sheriff's house. At first there seems to be but small danger of his falling in love with anybody—in spite of the recognized risk of such things happening whenever a young man comes to live in a family where there are unmarried and marriageable daughters. In the sheriff's house there are two unmarried girls. But the elder is too homely, too silly, and too sentimental to make any deep impression on him, and the younger is only a child, taciturn and recalcitrant, and too shy for him to form any opinion of her deeper nature. By chance he discovers that her reticence is not natural, but an attitude she has imposed

[1] See p. 107.

upon herself from fear of being exploited as her married sisters have been, and also of having her most intimate sentiments violated. From that moment he begins to take an interest in the young girl, although he still regards her as a child. She goes abroad to complete her education (just as the young Camilla Wergeland had done), and when she returns, Cold suddenly discovers that from a child she has grown into a young woman. Without any thought of love, he takes a pleasure in guiding this awakening soul. As might be expected, she falls in love with her tutor, and without knowing it, he falls in love too. When at last he discovers it, he at once resolves to declare his feelings to her. A chance makes him come to her just in time to save her from another suitor who will not accept her refusal. In her joyous excitement at being saved, she gets the start of him by telling him of her love first. He responds wholeheartedly to it, and everything seems to be very well, when an old friend of his turns up just as they are going to make their love known to her parents. Cold is afraid of the cynicism of this friend, afraid that his newborn happiness should be profaned, and so he disowns his love and speaks lightly of the young girl, in terms that are likely to wound her if ever reported to her. By a most unfortunate chance—there are rather many such chances in the book—she overhears their conversation. Judging by what she has seen of other men, Sophie never doubts that George Cold has spoken the truth to his friend, so he must have lied to her and made fun of her confession. Broken-hearted and bewildered, she refuses to speak to him, and he, who has not the slightest idea of the cause of her change towards him, is obliged to leave her without an explanation. A relatively short time after, she accepts the hand and fortune of Dean Rein, who might have been her father. Not till the eve of her wedding day does she learn from George's lips the fatal mistake. But it is already too late, the wheels of the machine called a fashionable wedding have already caught hold of her, and she feels that she would be crushed if she tried to escape.

To her sisters the same or similar things happen, everywhere woman's love is trampled underfoot as an obstacle to the superior interests of the family, or sacrificed to the true vocation of woman, as the sheriff's wife puts it.

It is easy to find fault with this novel: the composition is too loose, many characters are there only to illustrate the thesis of the author without throwing any additional light on the principal characters, the reflections and soliloquies occupy too much space, the characters are not sufficiently individualized, and more such things. But what makes up for all that is the author's penetrating analysis of the feelings, her masterly exposition of the degrading

situation of the society woman, the truthful pictures of society life in the country, and above all, the deep compassion for the sufferings of women. There is also the natural, clear, direct, sententious style, visibly influenced by George Sand and other French writers of the time. As for the leading ideas of the book, they will best be seen from a few significant passages. Margrete, who in the novel is the invisible and reflecting confidante of George Cold, writes in her diary :

" If it were possible men should not choose at all. In their choice they are mostly led by their sensual nature, placing possession above all.

" Nor should women choose. They are so little developed that they cannot even choose reasonably by reason. One would be horrified to see the motives that often make them accept an offer.

" For this reason one may say that ' arranged ' matches often present better warrants for happiness than is generally believed. They are not to be scorned.

" In truth, only one ought to choose, namely, woman's love.

" Men make their choice like fools, and pay for it like martyrs.

" Among all the real or imagined qualities in woman that appeal to man, he only forgets a little and insignificant one : her *love.*

" If, however, he happens to notice the absence of this little thing, he thinks : it will come in due time.

" All men think themselves Pygmalions who cannot fail to animate the statue when the time comes that she must necessarily descend from the pedestal.

" But marriage hardly ever creates love ; on the contrary, a fair portion of it must be brought into the union if it is to hold.

" A man, even without being a tender husband, can be a good one. He can fill his place in society with the same zeal and scrupulosity. His duty has its well-marked limits.

" But it is impossible to be a good wife without being tender. The wife's calling has no such limits. It consists in a multitude of vague, varied, nameless little things, invisible like the dew-fall, drawing whatever importance they have from the spirit from which they proceed. It is this spirit, the spirit of love, that makes the calling of woman infinite. Without love, her calling becomes a yoke, a vulgar duty, which at once she seeks to limit."

One more quotation from the same diary—a quotation that may have been taken from Camilla Collett's own :

" An author, who, by the way, opposes the emancipation movement, says : Women have only one source of experience : *love* ; that is their intelligence, their faith, their genius, their emancipation. Very well, we do not ask for any better. But this love itself

must first be emancipated, that is, it must be saved from barbarism and servitude. Protect therefore, O humanity! this first flower of our life, for by that every blessing is to ripen afterwards. Follow attentively its growth and its fruits. . . . Do not frivolously tamper with the delicate leaves at its heart, in the stupid belief that afterwards the coarser leaves will do as well. . . . No, they will not do. The difference between the two sorts is as great as that between the tea which we ordinary mortals are content to call by that name, and the tea which only His Celestial Majesty drinks, and which is the real tea; it is gathered first, and is so delicate that the reapers must pluck it with gloves on, after having washed their hands, I believe it is forty times." [1]

The County Sheriff's Daughters was at once hailed as the most important novel of the young Norwegian literature, and its importance was constantly growing for more than thirty years. Of the authors that have been strongly influenced by it we mention Henrik Ibsen and Jonas Lie, who have both acknowledged their indebtedness.

It is *The County Sheriff's Daughters* that places Camilla Collett among the great authors of Norwegian literature. But she has also written at least one other book that is still much read, and which probably will hold its place as long as the first. The book is the volume of recollections called *I de Lange Nætter* (During the Long Nights), published in 1863. It is certainly one of the most valuable as well as the most charming volumes of memoirs of our literature—which is rather poor in this respect. Its historical importance is largely due to the fact that it contains so much first-hand information about three remarkable personalities—the author herself, her brother Henrik, and her father Nicolai Wergeland. Between herself and her brother it had come to an estrangement after her marriage with Collett, who was on Welhaven's side in the literary feud of those years. Collett had written an article to show how Wergeland, the prodigal poet, had squandered his talent, and Camilla could herself see no better, and after that all communication between brother and sister ceased. In a pathetic passage in the *Long Nights* she writes:

"Our paths divided, they had to divide, and were never to meet again here. My brother! it was not so that I faithlessly left *your* path, only I could not follow you in the *mêlée*. From the quiet path on which *I* had to walk I have stood looking out for you, and waited and waited . . . but you never came back." It seems as if she had found nothing for which to blame herself by this time. There must have been a change in this respect later, for some of the

[1] Utilized by Ibsen in Falk's tea-table speech in *Love's Comedy*.

last words she ever wrote were the following : " In this life it was impossible to clear up the misunderstanding ; but I will do *everything* to atone for the sorrow I have given you."

However great the historical value of the *Long Nights* may be, its purely literary value is greater still. Camilla Collett's style is nowhere more limpid and full of grace, and never did she attain a fuller expression of her peculiar way of seeing and feeling. What the book lacks in force as compared with *The County Sheriff's Daughters*, it makes up for by its charm, and probably nothing of what its author has written is better loved.

Between those two books, Camilla Collett had published, in 1861, a volume of *Fortællinger* (Stories), containing the articles and sketches of which we have already spoken, with the addition of a new sketch, *Octoberphantasier*, criticizing the life and manners of Kristiania society. After the *Long Nights* she did not publish any new book for five years, and then, thinking that her literary activity was at an end, she called her book *Sidste Blade* (*Last Leaves*, with the sub-title *Recollections and Confessions*). They were, however, not to be her last leaves, she was still to publish no fewer than five books, some of them quite bulky ones, and a number of articles that she did not think worthy of being incorporated.

In the first of these volumes, called *Last Leaves, Second and Third Series* (1872), she for the first time sets up the emancipation of women as a political programme, and from this time all her forces were consecrated to that cause. She was, therefore, inclined to put this book foremost among her writings as the one that contained the first clear statement of her aims. The other four volumes were *Last Leaves, Fourth and Fifth Series* (1873), *Fra de Stummes Leir* (From the Camp of the Dumb, 1877), *Mod Strømmen* (Against the Tide, 1879), and *Against the Tide, Second Series* (1885). The most interesting of these last volumes, all occupied with the woman question, is the one called *From the Camp of the Dumb*. The author there reviews a great number of modern books, Norwegian and foreign, chiefly with the object of showing how the false, conventional views on woman have vitiated the works of even the best-intentioned authors. In spite of its exaggerations the book contains a great number of remarks that are still of interest, and that not only to the historian of literature.

We have already mentioned the great progress of the cause to which Camilla Collett had devoted her life. But she was of those natures that always have the feeling, not of what has been accomplished, but of what still remains to be done. Her own writings she (in a letter to Theodore Stanton) compares to those Arctic explorers who never return : they may find the northern passage,

but one hears no more of them. "I am neither discontented nor glad, only tired. I repent of nothing that I have written, a later generation must judge."

What we meet in the part of Camilla Collett's work that is still living, is above all the soul of a highly gifted and great-hearted woman, with her courage and her shyness, with her hopes and disillusions, with her joys and sufferings, with her entire womanliness. Speaking of her place in the company of our great authors, we may use Welhaven's words of her appearance in society :

> "Among the brilliant assembly
> she wore a crown invisible,
> for she alone walked in an aura
> of mild and graceful womanhood."

CHAPTER VIII

IVAR AASEN

IN the chapter on the National Awakening we mentioned the discovery of the unity of the Norwegian dialects and of their direct descent from the Old Norse language. This discovery and the man who made it, as well as its importance in our intellectual life, requires a somewhat fuller treatment.

IVAR ANDREAS AASEN was born in 1813 at the farm Aasen, in the parish of Ørsta in Sunnmøre, on the west coast of Norway. His father was the tenant of the farm on which he lived, not the owner of it, as Norwegian peasants mostly are. He was not *husmann* (cottar), however, but *leiglending* (leaseholder or tenant)—that is, he did not socially rank among the very lowest class of the peasantry, and no people, perhaps, stand more jealously on their rank than small tenant farmers. Ivar Aasen's parents would certainly in any part of England have been reckoned among the poor people, but such was not Aasen's opinion. The sense he gave to the word "poor" was a more democratic and a more heroic one, as may be seen from the following characteristic anecdote :

The publisher of a German encyclopædia sent him the proof-sheets of the article consecrated to him ; there he was said to be the son of poor peasants, but Aasen, marking the word *armen* in a note protested against the use of that word, as his parents had never been lacking what to eat or what to clothe themselves with.

Ivar, who was the youngest of five children, stayed at home, doing all sorts of farm work, till he was seventeen years old. His parents being dead, he was rather roughly treated by his elder brother, because he was not strong and therefore no good worker, and into the bargain given to such useless things as reading whenever he had an opportunity. He was, therefore, happy when, at the age of seventeen, he was found worthy to become a teacher in the elementary school of the parish. At that time there were practically no institutes for the education of elementary school teachers. Most teachers had never been to any school whatever, but had picked up what learning they had by private study or from the instruction of some country parson. The rector or vicar was, as

such, the head of the schools of the parish, which for the most part were not stationary, but ambulatory, the teaching being done in the children's homes, so many days in each house, according to the means of the owner. It was usual, though not obligatory, for children between seven and fourteen to attend, but the teaching did not last more than some two to eight weeks a year in each district. In such a school it was that Ivar Aasen became a teacher, but he did not remain in the post for more than two years. His ample leisure and his scanty income he spent in reading what books he could come across. Fortunately he soon got access to the library of some five hundred volumes of a well-to-do peasant in a neighbouring parish, and he made a large use of it.

But this was not enough to the inquiring mind of Ivar Aasen. He had been told that Dean Thoresen, the rector of another parish at Sunnmøre, undertook to instruct young teachers who wanted to extend their knowledge, and so he wrote to him and was accepted among his pupils. The Dean even invited him to come and stay in his own house, and Aasen gratefully accepted. After a short time, when the Dean had realized the extraordinary gifts of the young schoolmaster, he offered to procure the necessary means if he wished to prepare for university degrees. But Aasen, though appreciating the Dean's intention and generosity, declined the offer, thinking, to quote his own expression, " how toilsome and difficult it would be to a person of such humble station to transform himself so entirely, how long a time and how much pains the study of the ancient languages would require, how much care and cost it would mean to one's benefactor, and lastly, how great is the number of those who have chosen this career and are at a loss how to obtain situations." Instead of that, he goes on, " I had an idea of trying how far one might get in knowledge without having made regular studies, and I also thought that the nearer one stands to the common people, the more one can do for its education, and that with a culture above one's station one is honoured and respected, but not in the opposite case." His intention was that whatever he might acquire should be utilized in the best way possible for the good of the class to which he belonged.

Aasen stayed with Dean Thoresen for two years, studying chiefly geography, history, and grammar, and subsequently also Latin. At the end of the two years he got a situation as private tutor to the children of Captain Daae, living in another part of Sunnmøre. There he had the occasion to continue his studies, though mostly alone. What he read was principally grammars and other books treating of foreign languages—German, French, English, and Latin.

For several years already Ivar Aasen had been wondering why the dialects of Norway had never been made the object of scientific study, and he found the reason in the contempt shown by the educated classes to the people's language as well as to everything else belonging to the people. Now he came across a *Guide to the Icelandic or Old Norwegian Language,* by the great Danish linguist Rasmus Rask, and the idea began to dawn upon him that there existed a connection between the scattered, and to the learned unknown, country dialects and the rich literary language of mediæval Norway and Iceland. And out of this idea was born the great project of language renovation—the elaboration, scientific foundation, and practical realization of which was to be Ivar Aasen's life's work.

The first statement of this project was written down as early as 1836, when Ivar Aasen was not quite twenty-three years old. He begins by pointing out that the new political independence of the country needs to be completed by " an independent and national language, this being the principal characteristic of a nation."

But our national language, " the Norwegian popular language, is not to be seen in print nor in writing, nor to be heard except from the humbler classes. It has always been a great grief to me when I have heard the people's language outraged and laughed at, whether by well-dressed ignorance or by well-intentioned zeal of purification. Must we then, I thought, give up this costly treasure from the past, which our fathers have faithfully preserved through all their tribulations and transmitted to us as a sacred heirloom ; must our righteous possession of it be the object of contest now that freedom again dwells among our mountains ? " If Norway during the last centuries had been able to maintain its political independence, this folk-speech would have remained " our main language," would have been the bond of union between the country's dialects. But he thinks it still possible to restore it to the dignity of a national language. The little essay, which only recently has been published, ends with some indications as to the means of realizing the great plan : No single dialect must be set up as the national language, which ought to be a composite founded on all the dialects. Vocabularies must be collected from all the greater provinces, with grammatical information and exact definition of the words—and by people who really know the popular speech. The vocabularies are to be sent to a society of linguists, who are to compare them and select from the different dialects. When thus a national language has been decided on, the society is to compile a complete Norwegian dictionary with a corresponding grammar. The new language should not, however, be

imposed or enforced upon the people ; they were to be encouraged to use it, but everybody should be free to use the old or the new at pleasure.

From this time Aasen resolved to do what he could to prepare the realization of his plan. He taught himself Icelandic and Swedish as a personal preparation, and then began writing down whatever he could of his native and neighbouring dialects, and of his collections extracted a general view of the grammar of the Sunnmøre dialects, written in 1839, remoulded in 1841.

After many difficulties, which almost made the timid Ivar Aasen abandon his plan as hopeless, he at last got some philologists interested in his dialect studies, and in 1842 the Royal Society of Trondhjem granted him a yearly sum of 150 dollars species (about £33) to investigate the Norwegian country dialects. The sum was small for one who was to travel all the year or nearly so ; but travelling in Aasen's way, on foot, was cheap, and his wants were few, so that he almost succeeded in making both ends meet. After some years, however, the Government undertook to pay his stipend, which from that time was augmented now and then, so that at last it was five times as high as in the beginning.

Ivar Aasen's travels began in the autumn of 1842 and lasted, almost without an interruption, till 1847, that is, during almost five years. He visited practically every part of the country, taking down with the utmost fidelity everything concerning the people's speech and also a great number of tales, legends, proverbs, and other folklore. It was a difficult work and a burdensome life. The uneducated peasants rather looked down upon this little, unimpressive, poorly dressed man with his ridiculous curiosity for things that any educated person only sneered at. The bailiffs and sheriffs' officers more than once took him either for a dangerous vagabond or for some sort of spy, so that he always had to travel with a passport; this he sometimes forgot to renew punctually, and would then have the greatest difficulties in getting on. Now Ivar Aasen, in spite of his ambitious project of language reform, was personally excessively modest, and we can understand how much such treatment pained him, especially at the hands of the class for whom he was working and which he took a pride in belonging to.

In 1847 Aasen settled down in Kristiania, where he passed the remaining forty-nine years of his life, with the exception of a few summer months spent in travel, either to fill up some gap in his knowledge of the dialects or to revisit his family and birthplace. From this time on he has almost no personal history—he completely identified himself with his work, including his poetry, of which we

shall speak presently. As his signed publications were few, the general public did not hear much about him.

Not quite two years after Aasen had come to Kristiania, the first result of his researches was ready for publication. In the preface he explains what is the object of the work he is engaged upon, and of which *Det norske Folkesprogs Grammatik* (Grammar of the Norwegian Popular Language) is only a part. Accounts of his work and its purpose he had already some years before submitted to the Royal Society, and he gave others, complementary ones, in the prefaces of his following linguistic publications. The following *exposé* is taken from all those sources.

We have already seen that what first made Aasen wish for a scientific investigation of the popular language, was the contempt shown to it by the educated classes. When he set about the work it was less for the sake of science than for the sake of the people. Scientific research was to him above all a means of raising the people's speech, and thereby the people, to dignity, both in their own eyes and with the upper classes. Next, he wanted to make the popular speech into a literary language in order to facilitate the people's education and self-education, a result he felt sure of reaching if the people got books and papers in their own language. To this primary philanthropic and democratic purpose there soon came a national one. Out of the diversity of the many dialects was to be created a unified national language, that on one side would be a bond between all parts of our extensive and in many respects divided country, and on the other side prove to the world and to ourselves that we were a distinct nationality, with all the characteristics of one. And finally, his work had the scientific purpose of proving that the Norwegian popular language was not, as was generally believed at that time, a mass of corrupted forms of the literary, that is, the Danish language, but descended in a direct line from the Old Norse.

In the preface of the *Grammar*, Aasen for the first time publicly emits the idea, which, he says, lies close at hand, " that one should try to form a literary language, based either upon one dialect or on several dialects together. But such an enterprise would be sure to meet with many difficulties ; the vocabulary is adequate only to the usual simple sphere of ideas of the people, and some forms are so different in the dialects that it would be difficult to arrive at an agreement in the choice between them. . . . By such attempts a definite literary form might be prepared and foundations laid on which a future structure might be erected." . . . This, however, is only to be regarded " as preliminary suggestions for the consideration of those who take an interest in the matter."

In spite of the scientific nature of the Grammar, the author's philanthropic and democratic purpose is clearly seen both in the preface and in the plan of the work itself. As he says in the preface: "In the presentation of the rules I have chiefly had in view a certain class of readers, I mean instructed and inquiring men of the people, particularly such as know the usual school grammars." Professor P. A. Munch, in his review of the book, points out that if it "had been framed for the philologist, it must have started from the Old Norse to arrive at the (actual) popular language, while it now proceeds in the opposite direction." But he cautiously adds: "How far a book of this nature—which is bound to be scientific in any case—can realize the author's intention, whether it will not be the philologists all the same that chiefly will use it and study it, and whether in that case it would not have been most convenient to arrange it for their use—are things that remain to be seen."

Munch's review of the Grammar, which for the first time attracted the attention of the general public to Aasen's work, characterizes the book as "not only an ornament of our literature, but a national feat of which the whole people may be proud. For it shows that the more than a thousand years old Norse tongue is still strongly living and moving in the people, and with a genuine, original note which one will seek for in vain even in Iceland."

Munch agrees in the desirability and also in the possibility of raising our popular language into a literary language, even thinks it comparatively easy with such a guide as Aasen's Grammar. But in one thing he disagrees: he thinks that the actual language should be written in the orthography of the 13th or 14th centuries, which, he says, "has developed organically out of the language itself, thus being its natural orthography." This was to be the beginning of the still raging orthography controversy, which at times has been very bitter both among the followers of Aasen and between them and the upholders of the traditional literary language.

Not quite two years after his Grammar, Aasen could publish his next work, *Ordbog over det norske Folkesprog* (Dictionary of the Norwegian Popular Language, 1850). It contains in this first edition some 25,000 words, all, except a few hundred, taken down by the author from the lips of the people. Dictionaries being to most people dull reading, we shall only mention that in the opinion of all authorities there are, to quote P. A. Munch again, "extremely few dictionaries whose definitions for conciseness, clearness, and choice of expression can bear comparison to our author's." As to the orthography, Aasen in the main stuck to the same principles as in his Grammar, although he gave way to Munch's influence on some points.

During these and the following years, Aasen was eagerly trying to arrive at a definite normal form of the new Norwegian language that was to be the literary representative of all the dialects. He soon found it very difficult to reconcile the three purposes he had set himself, the philanthropic-democratic, the national, and the scientific; to these soon came, as a fourth consideration, the strong artistic sense of the author. From the scientific point of view—and it must be remembered that linguistic science at that time was romantic, sharing the romantic predilection for the remote and ancient—the ideal thing would have been to return to the Old Norse, or, failing that, to let its modern descendant appear in its magnificent array of four cases and full endings, unweakened vowels, and undropped consonants. Such a plan would also satisfy the national purpose of affording a literary language that was equally familiar (or rather, in the actual state of things, equally unfamiliar) to every part of the country. Moreover, this way spoke strongly to Aasen's artistic sense, the richness, symmetry, and full-sounded vowels of the Old Norse presenting, at least in the opinion of that time, a much more plastic material for artistic creation than could be obtained from a language that for centuries had been practically without literature, nay, without any conscious culture whatever. Only one thing remained to make Aasen keep to his original course: his interest for the common people, his desire to open up a way for them to a higher culture by providing them with the lever of a familiar and national literary language.

Aasen had a strong practical sense, and understood perfectly well that by following Munch's advice, that is, by "antiquating" the new literary language, it would be much easier for him to gain the support of the literary and scientific people, among whom National Romanticism reigned supreme at the time, and such support he thought necessary to arouse the interest of the people. On the other hand he was well aware that if he were to give the people the cultural lever that he wanted to prepare for them, the people must not only be interested in it, but actually feel it to be their own natural language, only with such modifications as its wider range made necessary and therefore natural.

Ivar Aasen hesitated for years between these different considerations, discussing his plan with scientific, political, and educational authorities. The result he arrived at is to be found in *Prøver af Landsmaalet i Norge* (Samples of the National Language of Norway), published in 1853. As might be expected, it is a compromise between the divergent tendencies. The base of the new literary language is in the living dialects, both in respect to grammatical forms and to phonetics. As for morphology, it was rather antique

in such things as the conjugation of verbs (though not in all respects) and the declination of adjectives; it was radical in using only two cases of the nouns (later only one). As for orthography, the system adopted was intended to give the sounds as actually pronounced, but in a way that permitted the recognition of the derivation of each word. This led to a preference for the dialects with a pronunciation recalling as much as possible that of the old language. On the whole the spelling adopted made the language look much more stiff and antique than it really was. To literary people with national-romantic ideas this was no drawback, but to the common people, for whom the work was primarily intended, it presented very grave inconveniences and made it difficult to recognize their own speech through such a drapery. Later on the spelling has been much simplified.

The first part of the *Samples* consists in a number of short articles—stories, sketches, and descriptions—in different dialects from all the chief parts of the country, thus representing the actual state of the national language. The second part gives Aasen's programme of reform in a series of pieces in what he proposes as a new literary language. This latter part comprises some specimens of folklore, a small number of essays and descriptions by Aasen himself, and finally a number of translations from foreign historians, philosophers, and poets. The selection of subjects shows Aasen's wish to demonstrate how far the new idiom was fit to be used not only in stories, descriptions, and poetry, but also in the various sciences, at least in those that have man for their subject.

The publication of *Prøver af Landsmaalet i Norge* marks an epoch in Ivar Aasen's life and work. From this time on his constant preoccupation was how to propagate the new literary language, by inducing authors and journalists to write in it, and the public, especially the common people, to read it. This work of propaganda was carried on both directly in public literary feuds and in private discussion, and indirectly, by writing works of science, of education, and of poetry and fiction in the new standard language, which we shall hereafter call New Norse.[1]

It is outside the scope of this work to discuss the actual position of the New Norse; for a judgment of Aasen's work as a reformer, we shall only quote the opinion of Moltke Moe, the man who of all

[1] Its everyday name in Norway is *landsmaal*, meaning national language in contradistinction to the dialects; the Dano-Norwegian language, which has been greatly modified since Aasen's time by the incorporation of many Norwegian words and a number of Norwegian inflectional forms, is commonly called *riksmaal*, a name that properly means official language, and which thus also might have applied to the New Norse, which for about thirty-five years has been recognized (at least on paper) as another official language.

our philologists and historians of literature may be supposed to be least biased by passion in this matter, believing as he did in the temporary necessity of both the Dano-Norwegian and the New Norse languages:

"It may safely be said that up to this time no language restoration has been planned and conducted with such all-embracing knowledge, with such sureness and comprehensiveness of view, and with, at the same time, such a genius of artistic touch. Aasen was one of the great artists among the linguists of the last century."

Aasen's principal linguistic works after the *Prøver* are the following three: his great collection of *Norske Ordsprog* (Norwegian Proverbs, 1856), and new editions, completely revised and considerably enlarged, of his Grammar and Dictionary. Aasen here takes as established the unity of the national language, and the Grammar and Dictionary in their revised form are the grammar and dictionary of the concrete expression of this unity, the New Norse. In accordance with that the titles are changed into *Norsk Grammatik* (1864) and *Norsk Ordbog* (1870) sans phrase. Of the new edition of the Dictionary it may be mentioned that it contains about twice as many words as the first, and that its qualities of conciseness, exactitude, and artistic form are here developed to still greater perfection.

Of Aasen's other works, besides his poetry, we only mention his *Heimsyn* (View of the World), which is almost unique in modern literature. Its models were the *Specula Mundi* of the Middle Ages, but its arrangement and views are quite modern. It is an attempt to give a succinct *exposé* of all our actual knowledge of the world, presented so as to be intelligible to all classes of the people. In this Aasen has succeeded so well that his work, although obsolete now in many of its statements that were correct enough in 1875, is still studied as a model of clear presentation of the principal results of human thought and research.

Aasen was not only a linguist, he was also a poet. His poetic work consists in some sixty poems, mostly short, published during his lifetime, and about the same number found among his papers after his death. To it we may also count his two short plays.

Of the plays only one need detain us here, namely, *Ervingen* (The Heir), which was played with much success at the Norwegian Theatre of Kristiania in 1855—for at that time there was still a Danish theatre in the capital of Norway. The success of *Ervingen* was due to its national and popular subject, to its painting of national customs, and to the poetry of the lyrical parts, and not

to its dramatic qualities, which are almost absent, unless the proverbial conciseness and plasticity of the speeches be counted as one. It was revived at intervals for more than thirty years at different theatres, and is still frequently given by the dramatic circles of the "Young People's Unions" (*Ungdomslag*) both in the country and in the towns.

The best of Aasen's poetry is to be found in one slender volume, and in some of the single poems that he published himself. The volume, published in 1863, was entitled *Symra* (Windflower, the Norwegian name meaning the flower that announces summer). Almost every one of its thirty odd poems is a little masterpiece in its kind, and at least half of them are among the best known and most frequently sung of our whole literature. Without ever rising to great lyrical heights, they are full of the simple and pure poetry of the life of the common people, of its hope and resignation, of its faith and its doubt, of its quiet wisdom and its stubborn will, all tinged with the sort of fatalism peculiar to the Norwegian peasant. They make one think of Marcus Aurelius, only the emperor's toga has been exchanged for the peasant's cloak, enabling him to enter everywhere without any consideration of his person, only of his message. As bits of craftsmanship these verses are almost impeccable, and probably unequalled in our literature for their utilization of all the values of the words. These very perfections make the poems extremely difficult to translate, so that we cannot hope to give more than a faint idea of the merits of the originals.

Symra starts with some Introductory Lines (*Fyrestev*) in which the modest author makes his excuse for this attempt at interpreting the thought of him "who low and humble is." However,

> "*Symra* announces the summer-time
> in early spring it blossoms;
> but other flowers must after come
> when winter's might is broken."

After the introduction follow a number of songs of the land and people of Norway. As an example of his lapidary verse, at the same time alliterative and rhyming, and of his vivid description we give in the original one stanza of the first, *Gamle Noreg*:

> "*G*amle *N*oreg, *n*ørdst i *g*rendom
> *e*r vaart *e*ige *æ*ttarland.
> Der er *h*av som *h*eilt aat endom
> *l*eikar um den *l*ange strand.
> Der er *v*ikar og *v*otn og øyar,
> *t*usund *f*jordar og *t*usund *f*jell,
> *s*nøydor, der *s*njoen *s*jeldan tøyar,
> *d*alar der *f*ossen *d*iger *f*ell."

Of another poem of this group we try an unrhymed translation :

THE OLD MOUNTAINS

" The olden mountains against the sky
are always just the same :
their rugged outlines as of old,
their peaks unchanged remain.
Below i' the valleys people build
their houses, soon to fall,
but those bound'ry stones from ancient times
unshaken still they stand.

What thrilling pleasure is it not
to stroll about up there,
and climbing to the lofty peak
to view the land below,
to view along the shores the sea
with ships like tiny birds,
and the mountains circling in the plains
with thousand hillocks blue.

The vales are like a passing show
of ever new events,
so many changes come about
in briefest span of time :
the fields are turnèd upside down,
wood cleared, and houses built,
but the good old rocks are standing still
as firm as e'er they stood.

Through countless ages thus they stood
defying ev'ry change,
while grass and leaves upon their slopes
came new with every spring.
The storm would try to bend their top,
the flood to shake their foot,
but however challenged these old boys
would always hold their own.

The sailor, homewards bound from sea
and yearning for the land,
will sight the mountains from afar
and recognize his strand.
Such sight will kindle courage new
in every man and boy :
Yea, the old, the bonny mountain-peaks
they fill the heart with joy."

One of the sections has a more personal note, of which the following stanza may serve as an example. Aasen, who all his life

remained a bachelor and often felt lonely and as if defrauded of the better half of life's values, speaks of his *Saknad* :

" There is a heart, I know full well,
filled with the self-same feeling,
where equal hopes and memories dwell,
the same regrets concealing.
If I but found it all were right
and life's whole burden would be light.
And then to know : for ever
shall Fate our twin hearts sever ! " [1]

The last group of the poems of *Symra* gives us Aasen's philosophy of life, which perhaps finds its most comprehensive expression in the poem called *Livet* (Life), of which we give a few stanzas :

" Life is cruel and Life is kind,
grief now, but gladness to-morrow.
Gallant he who with equal mind
accepts both joy and sorrow.

Dark days come, as it needs must be,
but sunny days behind them.
The greatest joys we sometimes see
where least we thought to find them.

Leaves which wilt with the autumn call
the spring with green replaces.
Death goes ravaging over all,
but Life treads in his traces.

Wild the storm in the forest raves,
the mighty trees uprooting,
but from the fallen giants' graves
fresh twigs will soon be shooting.

Dear is Life : advancing years
will light from darkness sever,
but still a hope my bosom bears
of one that lasts for ever." [1]

Out of the some thirty poems that Aasen published at different occasions, we only mention a few. *Haralds-Haugen* (The Mound of King Harold) is a stately poem in the memory of the uniter of Norway into one kingdom, written in an Old Norse measure (*fornyrðislag*) for the millenary of Harald's decisive battle in 872. *Dikt og Sanning* (Fiction and Truth) is a clear presentation of the relation of art to life, as viewed by an old sage of the people. The *Livssyn* (View of Life) is another expression of his philosophy, where resignation ends in a religious hope.

[1] Translated with the kind assistance of Mrs. G. W. Gordon-Küchling.

Ivar Aasen had the good fortune to see the cause to which he had devoted his life ever advancing, although its progress was not so fast as he might have wished. He never lost patience, answering the hot-heads and mockers that

> "They are always complaining and chiding,
> we so slowly and tardily go;
> but I think there's no ground for deriding:
> we come surely although we come slow."

Although the recognized and respected leader of a movement of increasing importance, Aasen was personally the most unassuming of men. He was always, even after having lived for almost half a century in the capital, shy and silent where many people were gathered, but would brighten up and become communicative when conversing with one.

Ivar Aasen died in Kristiania on the 25th of September 1896, at the age of eighty-three. He was followed to the grave both by opponents and partisans, who all recognized his great qualities.

CHAPTER IX

AASMUND VINJE

WHEN Ivar Aasen in the beginning of the 'fifties formulated his plan for restoring the popular speech of Norway to the dignity of a literary language and a medium of general culture, it at first met only with a rather academical interest. Only few people realized the full import of it if carried out, and the sympathies of those people were divided from the very first. But as long as all that was published in it were merely a few Samples or specimens, there was not much to make a great stir about. *Ervingen,* by its popular success, aroused interest in the New Norse language in wider circles—but still it was only a single work, and the beginning discussion soon ebbed out. The first real *maalstrid* (language-conflict) came only with the man who first of all made the new language his general medium of literary expression, in fiction and in journalism. This man was Aasmund Vinje.

AASMUND OLAVSSON VINJE was born on the 6th of April 1818 at Vinje, in Upper Telemark. His father was a cottar, but considered himself a little above other cottars, because he paid his rent in money and not in work, as cottars in Norway generally do or did. Olav Aasmundsson was an original in more than one respect, feared for his sharp tongue and heavy fist, and also for his callousness or even cruelty. But he was an intelligent and well-read man, and knew a number of popular ballads and songs, and thus in a way was a welcome guest in most places in his native district, where such things were highly appreciated. His son, our poet, inherited a great deal, both of the vices and the qualities of his father, and his admiration for him is certainly less due to filial piety than to congeniality of temper and disposition. Aasmund Vinje used to say of his father that he was "a much better philosopher than either of the two professors of philosophy in the University, because, if he had learned a little less, he had in return much better brains than they."

As a boy Aasmund was rather slow to develop, but when at last his curiosity was awakened he soon overtook all the other children of his age. His home was poor, and he had to work for his living

by looking after the goats and sheep and cattle both of his father and of his neighbours. He has told how he used to stay up in the mountains alone with the animals, sleeping under rocks or juniper bushes, or in a rough stone-hut, where the goats had scraped the turf off the roof so that he looked straight up into the sky from his bed of moss. From this life he acquired an extraordinary sympathy with animals and familiarity with their ways. He would often declare that the best teacher for children was the goat. It may be imagined that it is from this teacher Vinje acquired some of his capriciousness.

But although life and Nature were Vinje's first teachers, they did not long remain the only ones. From the age of twelve or thirteen he developed great taste for reading, and read whatever books he could get at—that is, Holberg, Petter Dass, some old Chronicles, a few books of history and geography, not to speak of the Bible and other books of religion which he fell back upon when nothing else was to be had.

When Aasmund was sixteen years old, he was confirmed. On that occasion it was—and in some places still is—the custom that the children are placed in the aisle of the church according to the marks obtained at a foregoing examination. Now Aasmund Vinje had got the best marks, but was all the same placed after another who happened to be the son of a freeholder, and this slight was bitterly felt by the sensitive boy. Not that he was not already aware of the social inferiority of the cottars—peasants no more than noblemen can be expected not to make their superiority felt to their inferiors; but this was the first official confirmation of the fact, and bred much bitterness in him.

For another couple of years Aasmund Vinje remained at home, but the craving for knowledge had got its clutches into him, as he expresses it, and helped on by the vicar he at the age of nineteen or twenty became a teacher in the ambulatory parish school. His school work—for which he was paid 8 or 10 dollars a year—did not take more than some ten or twelve weeks annually, and the rest of his time he worked as a day-labourer for the peasants, or made clogs, or distilled liquor, which he—unlawfully—sold to the parents of his pupils. In summer he generally went into the mountains with herds of cattle, staying there till autumn. During the five years he remained in his post as a teacher he gained much experience—and succeeded in laying aside 100 dollars species (about £30). With this sum in his pocket he started off to acquire more knowledge, his first destination being the teachers' training school.

After a full course at the training college, Vinje returned home, but only to be disappointed in his hope of becoming a teacher in

the stationary school of the parish. He now thought of emigrating —this was just the time when the "America Fever" began its ravages among the youth of Norway. But his family prevailed upon him to apply for a situation at the school of the little coast town of Mandal. He was appointed, and there he now passed four years of the greatest importance for his development. Used as he was to hard work the teaching did not take more than half his day, and the rest was spent in study of every kind; among other things he studied history, geography, philosophy, theology, mathematics, astronomy, navigation,—he even passed the mate's examination,—book-keeping,—he thought of taking up trade and provided himself with a licence,—and last but not least, politics. His peasant mentality, unbiased as to philosophical and theological doctrines, and his extensive reading soon made him a sceptic of the traditional Lutheranism which was taught around him and which he was supposed to teach himself to his classes. Fortunately for him there were still to be found in Norway quite a number of belated 18th-century rationalists, so that he, without too much personal risk, might profess his advanced opinions. It was not till some twenty years later that the systematic persecution of free-thinkers began which counted among its victims Alexander Kielland.

Vinje also took an active interest in politics, and this interest led him into journalism, first of all in the local press during the electoral campaign of 1847, when he was nominated one of the electors, and even had a few votes as a candidate for the Storting. In the following year, when, as a consequence of a reorganization of the school, he had been dismissed from his situation, he went to the capital to prepare for the university, making his living the while by writing for the leading Liberal paper, *Morgenbladet*. The school he went to was that of Heltberg, known in the literary history of Norway as the "Student Factory," the school where besides Vinje also Ibsen, Bjørnson, and Jonas Lie prepared for the matriculation degree. Ibsen and Bjørnson were Vinje's classmates, and both they and Jonas Lie became his friends; if later all those friendships were broken or at least interrupted, the fault was not least on Vinje's side. Vinje was nothing if not critical; he did not, as the Norwegian expression goes, lay his fingers between, either when looking or when striking. As may happen to such people, he sometimes struck wide of the mark.

After one year at Heltberg's school Vinje presented himself for matriculation, but was refused because he tried to cheat at the Latin translation. He has himself told how he did it—not out of necessity, but out of frivolity and because he saw an occasion to cheat: "I

thank God that it was not a greater sin; my fermenting scepticism might have turned me into the worst of criminals. I was literally resembling the Icelander who struck the head off a bondman because he had just received a good new axe, and because the bondman stood in such an excellent position for being beheaded. It was neither hatred nor cruelty, it was only frivolity and curiosity. It is this old spirit of savagery that people in our days can so little understand—and well it is that they should not." Vinje presented himself again next year, and this time he passed without any difficulties.

In 1848 and the following years Norway saw its first Labour movement, led by a young student, Marcus Thrane. It grew rapidly in number, claimed a share, or rather a say, in the government of the country. The authorities took fright, arrested the Labour leaders, and had them sentenced to months or years of imprisonment, and that was the end of the movement for the time. Hardly any of the politicians, Conservative or Liberal, raised a voice in protest against the inhuman treatment of the Labour leaders. Vinje, like Ibsen and many other young men, had taken a strong interest in the movement, and now he and they lost all confidence in political parties, for a time even in all political ideals. Like Ibsen, he began to cultivate his irony and scepticism, his *tvisyn*, or double vision, as he called it himself, that would permit him to " see at the same time the right and the wrong side of life's tissue."

The years nearest before and after 1850 were to literary people in many respects a desolate period, in spite of the recent discovery of national folklore and folk-music. It seems as though the general public never took so little interest in literature or in intellectual life generally as during this time. What absorbed public interest was the development of a national trade and national industries, of agriculture, of communications, of banking, of everything that tended to make the country materially prosperous. Everywhere in the literature of this time we meet with the same complaint: poets and artists felt themselves isolated in the people, felt as if they were speaking into empty space or to felted walls. It was in a sort of self-defence that many of them, separately or in groups, took to scepticism and to treating with irony the philistine society around them.

Among those critics several of the most gifted formed a little group where the most conspicuous figures were, at least in the beginning, Vinje, Ibsen, and a common friend, Paul Botten-Hansen, a peasant's son from Gudbrandsdal. In 1850 those three started a critical weekly, modelled upon the *Corsair*, a Danish paper edited

by the Jew Meïr Goldschmidt. In this paper, which first appeared without a title and which later was named *Andhrimner* after the gods' cook in the Old Norse mythology, Vinje was to write on home politics, and in a series of articles he developed his new views on the subject. In one of his articles he, speaking of the party system, declares that the parties do not want spirit, except as a watchdog to set at John and Jack ; freedom is to them only a pack-horse, and from such drudgery to bondage the way is not long. And speaking of dogmas he proclaims that " truth is not a thing you may put in your pocket and walk about with in the street, or take out like a stamped weight to put it in the balance." We have got no absolute standard measure, and therefore truth cannot be a hard-and-fast thing, but is constantly growing and taking on new shapes. What Vinje would call " true Liberalism " was to see the reason on both sides, to try to understand one part and the other and thus judge independently between them.

Andhrimner did not live more than some nine months. When it ceased to appear Vinje had already got work elsewhere — as correspondent to a Drammen paper, a work he was engaged in for eight years. His letters—he wrote two or three of them almost every week—attracted much notice, and were comparatively well paid, although he had to take part of his salary *in natura* as sugar, bacon, and dairy produce. He wrote on every subject, art, literature, philosophy, science, politics, and the events of the day. In many respects he was almost an ideal journalist, as he knew everybody and could make friends with all sorts of people, Professors and Cabinet Ministers as well as poets, students, workmen, and vagabonds, and was able to identify himself momentarily with the point of view of any of them. For this reason he was at once informed, and from the best sources, of everything happening, and he did not require much to have a subject for an article.

Vinje's letters to *Drammens Tidende* constitute more than one half of what he has written. With the exception of a small selection, which is incorporated in the last edition of his " Collected Writings " (*Skrifter i Samling*, Kristiania, 1915–21), they have never been republished. This selection, however, gives a good idea of their variety, of their witty and original treatment of every subject, and of the development of the author's style.

But Vinje found time for much other work besides his journalistic activity. He wrote, for instance, a number of sketches and poems for various periodicals or newspapers, and made songs to order for all sorts of meetings and feasts, for artisans' guilds, for choral unions, and even for birthdays and weddings. All such things, however, were trifles compared to his lecturing activities.

Already as a freshman in the Students' Union Vinje had attracted notice as an original and witty speaker in the discussions, and he soon began to take part in other meetings as well, political and others, and always seemed to give a new turn to the debate. He quickly became a very popular orator, who was always asked to come whenever there was to be a meeting. "His semi-official visiting-tours became more and more frequent, and at last no proper 'cattle-meeting,' horse-show, agricultural exhibition or other public meeting of any kind, nay, not even a somewhat large family party, was thinkable without Vinje being asked to come. He was ordered, and fetched with a carriage and horses, and might justly be called national feast-traveller," writes his friend Botten-Hansen.

In his correspondence to his paper Vinje reports some of his speeches on public occasions, and from these reports and from printed speeches of his from a later period, as well as from contemporary judgments of him, we may form an opinion of him as a lecturer. What is most characteristic about him is the freshness of his observations, the unexpectedness of his remarks and sallies,—which, however, mostly kept some connection at least with the original subject,—the extreme vividness of his imagery, and last but not least, his inexhaustible wit, which might be good-humoured or ironical or satirical according to circumstance. The effect of his delivery, especially the comical effect, was heightened by his personal appearance: tall and gaunt and bony, with a long, meagre, bearded, irregular face, where the mouth was wry and one eye sat higher and was larger and more protruding than the other. Bjørnson characteristically describes him as with one eye tear-wet and beaming, the other in ambush for sarcasm. There was also something wrong with one knee—even the joints of this unconventional man seemed to go the wrong way—and he had a most extraordinary gait, seemed to drag himself along and at the same time lifted his feet high as if always walking among stones and shrubs.

These lecturing tours were only festive interruptions of Vinje's everyday life of hard work. For besides the activities already mentioned, he was also a persevering reader of all kinds of literature, and a student of Law. His intention was to take a degree and afterwards settle down as a barrister, and at the same time to edit a paper where he could develop and propagate his ideas. In spite of his many occupations he obtained his degree in 1856. The next two years he served his articles of apprenticeship as a secretary to an advocate in Kristiania, but by the end of that time he had arrived at the conviction that a barrister's work was not for him—he had not

quite the necessary callousness. His hope now was to get a situation in some Government office—it being then the usual way of recognizing literary merit to give the author some appointment, with the mutual, though tacit understanding that the official duty was not to be taken too seriously. But Vinje plainly said in his applications that his object was to earn his bread, and at the same time to get leisure for literary production. This was carrying the policy of honesty too far, and for years Vinje obtained nothing, although he had every legal qualification for the situations he applied for.

In 1859 Vinje gave up his post as correspondent, not because he was dissatisfied with the material conditions, but because he found it incompatible with what he had now come to consider his calling in life : to help in the restoration of the national idiom to the dignity of a literary language and a medium of universal culture.

Vinje had early taken an interest in the discoveries of Asbjornsen and Moe, and still more in those of Ivar Aasen and in his plan of a new literary language. The *Landsmaal* in its first shape seemed to him rather difficult to people who had no training except in Danish. After various attempts to modify his Danish by introducing Norwegian phrases, words, and even inflectional forms, he found it impossible to express himself to his own satisfaction in that language. After long deliberations he resolved to try instead to write a Norwegian that, while taking Aasen's *Landsmaal* for its pattern, would keep sufficiently near to the accustomed Danish to be understood by the general reader without too much difficulty. With such ideas he, in the autumn or 1858, started the weekly paper *Dolen* (The Dalesman).

Dolen is one of the most curious papers that ever existed. It was, as Vinje himself said, " a human being and not a dead paper." *Dolen* was Vinje—and Vinje was *Dolen*. He practically wrote all of it himself, and as he was an irregular person, so *Dolen* was an irregular paper. During the twelve years of its existence, eight annual sets actually appeared, and only three of them contained the " regular " number of fifty-two issues.

Dolen expressed its idea of the language situation in the following verses in the first issue :

> " Long bore our people thraldom's chain
> and never might rejoice.
> It got its freedom back again :
> It must get back its voice."

But such a restoration is not the work of a moment, he goes on to say : " The fact is that the Danish language has made the tongue of the Norwegian people lopsided, and more so in the towns than in

the villages, more in the villages than among the mountaineers. If then somebody—like myself here—wishes to speak to all those people, he is quite at a loss what to do : if he speaks good Norwegian, he will not be understood by all, and he wants above all to be understood and listened to. Nor if he speaks Danish will he be understood by all, and least by those who are most in need of education. I will therefore make an attempt with a language half-way between Norwegian and Danish, indeed make my way by cajoling people into listening as if they were children. It is a strange thing to compromise with one's own language ; but the people has gone astray, it wants to find the right way, but cannot always find it. I will humour people as much as I can : if they think I am going too far, I shall reduce my pretensions, but not too much, and if people will stand a better Norwegian they shall have it."

Perhaps it is the constant balancing of those two efforts : to make himself understood, and to be as Norwegian as people would stand it, that has given to Vinje's style much of its life and force and clearness and freshness. Anyhow, it was the zeal for his new ideal that made of him a man and a poet. As has been pointed out by his biographers, it is almost unique that a poet who, up to the age of forty, has hardly written anything of lasting value, after that age produces a series of poems that count among the masterpieces of our literature, and that would count as such in any literature.

In *Dølen*, and only there, we find a complete expression of Vinje's many-sided personality. Never, perhaps, did author so unreservedly give whatever was in him to his public. His knock-about existence had taught him a philosophy where nothing was stable, except an intense love of life in all its manifestations. After he gave up writing in Dano-Norwegian, his life was an almost constant attempt to solve the difficult problem how to live by the ideas you feel compelled to live for. With the exception of three years (1865–68), when he was a junior clerk in one of the Government departments, Vinje had no regular income, and more than once he was literally on the point of starving. He saw his literary contemporaries, Bjørnson and Ibsen, honoured and comparatively prosperous, but when he applied for a similar grant as they had received from the Storting, his application was simply laid aside and not discussed by the House. He stood alone, and might with reason have considered himself a martyr for the national cause. But it was foreign to his nature to complain—he was a man used to hardships, who would quote with King Sverre the old saying : " Such things will happen at sea, said the seal, he was shot in the eye." Or as he expresses it elsewhere :

" In spite of all, that which you gain
along life's way,
is cheaply bought for all the pain
with which you pay.
Not until you have gained indeed
this precious thing
the Book of Life you've learnt to read,
Death has no sting.

Unless deceit has done you wrong
so many a time,
in truth, you cannot sing the song
of love sublime.
You must upon the ruins stand
of all that's dear,
then only will your view expand
and all be clear." [1]

We may say that this philosophy pervades the whole work of Vinje from this time on.

The first work that Vinje published in volume form was *Ferdaminni fraa Sumaren 1860* (Recollections from a Journey in the Summer of 1860), which appeared in 1861, and was sent to the subscribers of *Dølen* as a compensation for missing numbers. The journey is one he undertook in order to see the coronation of the King at Trondhjem, and he uses it as a pretext for telling in a seemingly haphazard way about his views and his knowledge of the rural population of Norway. He wants to reverse the picture Bjørnson had drawn of the Norwegian peasant as being too romantic and too much idealized, and therefore lacking in real life, for " dream and fiction and art are pale when compared to a glimpse of true life when we view it in the right way." What Vinje wants is national progress, and he thinks the national dreaming of the romanticists an obstacle to it. But he was not an exclusive nationalist :

" We think and believe that the noblest call
is faithful Norwegians to be.
Yes, this our home we love first of all,
remembering though that it's the small
and the World itself our great *patrie*.

Our greatest ideas are always lent
by the greater World-intellect.
We shape them after our temperament,
like sunrays that waves through which they're sent
in different hues reflect."

[1] Translated with the assistance of Mrs. Gordon-Küchling.

Ferdaminni, however, is not only an exposition and a criticism of national habits and national romanticism, its fresh and salt prose and occasional verse also contain much of the finest poetry of Norwegian scenery and popular life. As an example we give a translation of one of the best known poems, *Ved Rondarne* :

AT RONDARNE

"Now I again see mountains and deep valleys
like those I saw in early childhood's day;
the same wind now my heated brow is fanning,
and gold lies on the snow as then it lay.
A childhood tongue to me is strangely speaking,
it makes me glad, though wistful, by its say:
its speech with youthful memories is blended,
I listen, breathless, to its flow unended.

Yes, life streams on me as it then was streaming
when 'neath the snow I saw the first green straw,
again I dream, just as I then was dreaming
when peaks like these against the sky I saw.
And now as then towards night the sun is gleaming:
forgotten is each failing and each flaw.
I trust I'll find a shelter that will hide me
when home 'gainst night the sun will gently guide me.

All is as then it was, although transfigured,
so that the daylight seems to me more bright;
and that which cut and stung and deeply pained me,
the very shadow makes it almost light.
E'en that which oftentimes to sin did lead me
will soften down when hard rocks loom in sight.
And softer now the old thoughts me are meeting:
the same heart 'tis, that now is older beating.

In every stone I see an old companion,
such when, a boy, I ran about, they were.
As were they warriors, I ask who is winning
of this and that high mountain over there.
All things remind me, and again remind me,
till on the snow shall die the sun's last glare,
and into sleep—like tales my mother told me—
shall childhood memories allure and fold me." [1]

Ferdaminni is, it may be added, still one of the most living and even actual books of that time.

In the summer of 1862, Vinje went to England with a small grant from the Government and another from the Royal Society of Trondhjem, in order to study administration and social organization there. He stayed, or rather travelled about, in England and Scotland for almost a year. The chief results of his study he laid

[1] Translated by I. G. and O. R.

down in a little volume, *A Norseman's View of Britain and the British*, written in English and published in Edinburgh, 1863. The book is formed as a series of letters to J. S. Welhaven, and contains a survey and a criticism of British institutions, literature, morals, and manners. His method of study is quite different from that of the ordinary official investigators, who, with their letters of introduction, go to the various authorities for information. Vinje wanted to see for himself, to know how the different institutions really worked, not how they, officially, were supposed to work. To study the land system he did not go to the Board of Agriculture, but to the farmers, great and small, to the landowners, to the cattle-shows and markets for farm produce. To study the administration of justice, he went to the courts and listened to the proceedings, comparing them afterwards with the public opinion as given by the press, and with the law system of other countries. And so in every department of public life. Among the chief topics dealt with in Vinje's book, we only mention the British race, social organization and morals, the land question and what he calls the system of social drainage—that is, the system that makes all the produce of work flow together like brooks or drains into the pockets of a few landowners; further, the rank superstition and snobbery, press, literature, religion in theory and practice, and the belief in money. As the book is of only some one hundred and sixty pages, the treatment of many topics must needs be very summary. It gives, however, a fairly good picture of its author, besides being an original attempt to view Britain and the British unbiased by current opinion.

A Norseman's View did not attract much notice in Britain at its appearance, nor was it very favourably received. The *Saturday Review* wrote very severely about the hardy Norseman, admitting, however, that he had much of the rude power of Cobbett. Perhaps the book may be read with a greater sympathy—and surely with great interest—now that Englishmen have got more into the habit of criticizing themselves.

During Vinje's stay in Britain, and during the following year, which he passed in Sweden, *Dølen* appeared very irregularly, and for long periods did not appear at all—for want of money. But in 1865, Vinje at last got a situation as a clerk in the Law Department, with a small salary, which, however, enabled him to live without care for the daily bread. His work left him sufficient leisure, both for reading and for editing his paper. During the following three years, probably the happiest of all his life, Vinje wrote much of his best poetry, and especially his most perfect work, the cycle of poems called *Storegut*. The hero of this book is a strong and good-natured young peasant, whose various feats are sung—

his life as a shepherd, as a soldier, as a visitor to the great market-meetings, as a revenger of poor people's wrongs. The story told is historically true, a circumstance to which Vinje attached some importance. The poem about *Storegut*, in its straight and strong language, reproduces as no other work of our literature, the nature, the life, and the very atmosphere of the Norwegian mountain valley. And as it is true to the facts, so its way of narrating them is of the very noblest beauty.

But this happy period was not to last long. Vinje had used his constitutional right to criticize the Government—branding their Union policy as unnational. The Government, however, could not legally punish the editor, and so they instead dismissed the Government clerk. Vinje now again had to try to live by his authorship alone, however difficult that might be. But he did not lose courage: he kept *Dølen* going, made some lecturing tours to different towns, and was helped in many ways by his friends. In the following year he even was sanguine enough to marry, but his wife died within the year, after having given him a son. Vinje was taken ill at the same time, and had to go to the hospital before his wife died. Over his bed in the ward hung two slates: on one was written the Latin name of the disease which the doctors thought he suffered from; the other was intended for a list of the clothes and other possessions that the patient brought along with him. On that one there was nothing.

When he felt that the end was nearing, he escaped from the hospital—he would not die in such a pent-up air—and succeeded in reaching the house of a friend in the country some thirty miles from the capital. In the morning he was found dead in his room,—the 30th July 1870. He was buried in the churchyard close by his friend's house, the parsonage of Gran in Hadeland. On his grave there is now a bust of him by his friend Brynjulf Bergslien, one of our best sculptors.

If Aasen was a lover of solitude, Vinje delighted in society. We have already mentioned his faculty for making acquaintances, and nowhere did he find himself better than in the circle of friends that formed around him. He has himself described their evening gatherings: "There we were seated with heaps of books about us and a good glass and smoked herrings and sausage. It was a good time. There would be—let me take them according to age: Asbjørnsen, Ivar Aasen, me, Ibsen, Bjørnson, Sars, and besides some Saul or other in between all these prophets. 'We must make ourselves interesting, boys,' I said, when the company at first looked a little stiff. 'Should not *here* be brains and *esprit* and sparkling wit, then I wonder where'; and so it went off."

It is surely of these meetings he has thought when he wrote the following verses :

"My happiest time is always when
wise men with wise men vie,
when evenings long I talk with them.
When steel meets flint, be sure that then
fast firesparks will fly.

Then thoughts, like feathered shuttlecock,
will nimbly rise and fall,
swiftly sent out and swift returned,
like shadows flitting in the air
they play between us all."

But if Vinje loved good company, he loved quite as much nature, and especially the mountains. Each spring he became restless to get out of town and up into the fells, and to the highland scenery he has written some of his most beautiful poems. We know him best with the satchel on his back and staff in hand, and thus he liked to picture himself too. He said to his friend Sars, the historian, who for several years was his companion on his summer wanderings : "When I die my spirit will take up its abode high up among the mountains ; then I shall sit on Mount Falketind and look out over Norway, and the glittering ranges, blue and white, shall spread out around me."

"Spirited and two-edged, that is just what I call Norwegian." These words, with which Vinje characterized one of his contemporaries, apply better to himself than to anybody else. Typically Norwegian he was in his spirit of contradiction, even of self-contradiction. With all his sincere love of his country and his desire to work for it, this spirit of contradiction turned his hand against everybody, and every man's hand against him. Born a peasant, he felt himself most strongly attracted to the capital, and the chief endeavour of his mature life was the harmonizing of town and country. But the people's response to this endeavour was mostly such that one is reminded of one of his poems—written in all probability without any thought of himself, and merely in expression of his reflections when wandering Along a River (*Langs ei Aa*) :

"Thou wood that bendest down against
and kissest this dark river's face,
which, gnawing at thy heart-root, strains
to draw thee down in its embrace :
Oh, how like thee I many a one—
and most of all in life's spring—found,
who just that hand would still caress
which struck his heart the deepest wound." [1]

[1] Translated by I. G.

In his struggle against incomprehension and misconstruction, Vinje might well feel some bitterness now and then, but he never allowed it to settle down and become pessimism. He thought that no man had the right to make his personal misfortune into an omen of public disaster. For his own part he sought consolation in Nature and in the company of good friends—and some such he always had, however hostile or disdainful the general public might be. But what more than anything else helped him to rise above the miseries and misfortunes of the day, were just his peculiar *tvisyn*, his gift of seeing and sympathizing with life from all sides. One of the expressions of this sympathy we find in his poem of *The Three Sisters* :

" Three sisters row me on Life's great tide,
with golden paddles steering :
Song, Laughter, and Tears my vessel guide
like a fish aswim, till the waves subside
when the rocks of Death are nearing.

When Fortune coveted gifts she gave
and took them away from my keeping,
when all I lost that I fain would save,
I learnt, thanks to Tears, I could still be brave,
for comfort would come with weeping.

Much pleasure and mirth in my life I got,
I aimed at my target and hit it.
Like lightning Laugh from my heaven shot,—
and Tears flowed so that joy might not
in filling my bosom split it.

I sank as I weary struggled along,
but rose when the way grew brighter.
I fed my hunger on want and wrong,
I sinned, but all I put into Song,
and Song made my burden lighter.

And apple-blossoms my boat did cheer
and foam from waterfalls hoary,
with Smiling Lips and with Welling Tear,
with Song in my heart I saw full clear
the opening heaven's glory.

Tears first I knew of those sisters three
in the days of childish crying.
With my growing strength came then Laugh to me,
and lastly came Song, but she will be
my comrade till I am dying.

When Tears shall freeze in their sources twain,
their salt having lost its savour,
when Laugh shall have lost her playful strain,
and cracked is her gold-bell of finest grain,
then Song brings sleep's last favour." [1]

[1] Translated with the assistance of Mrs. Gordon-Küchling.

Vinje's chief importance in his own day was that he took up Ivar Aasen's idea of restoring the national language to its ancient place and honour, and with Aasen became the founder of the literature in the new standard language. To our time he is above all the great lyrical poet, the inspired interpreter of Norwegian scenery and popular life, and the spirited critic with the fresh, unbiased vision of national life, literature, politics, and institutions. And last but not least, he is the rejuvenator of Norwegian prose style, quite as much for the Dano-Norwegian as for the New Norse. His clear, direct, and deliberately popular style, with a richness and freshness of imagery that compels the reader to realize in the most vivid manner the author's idea, has influenced all subsequent writers to such an extent that Norwegian prose after his time has come to be quite distinct from what it was before. Speaking of style—it is curious to think that four so utterly different personalities, without having any idea of it themselves, should have come to collaborate in the formation of Norwegian prose style : Asbjørnsen and Moe, by their discovery and rendering of the classical epic style of our popular tales; Camilla Collett, by her clearness and elegant simplicity of diction, partly learnt from French writers; and Vinje, by his directness and strong fresh imagery, making the people's life of itself speak the thoughts of the people.

CHAPTER X

BJØRNSTJERNE BJØRNSON, THE NATIONAL POET

IN the stream of Norwegian literature Henrik Wergeland, with his short, impetuous life, is like the rushing, foaming waterfall, the *foss*, with generative power for all kinds of activity. His successor is the broad, navigable river below: there is hardly a matter of national interest that BJØRNSTJERNE BJØRNSON did not take up and carry along; through his works we can make our way far into the life of Norway. Like his more spontaneous, higher-soaring predecessor, Bjørnson enjoys the onward movement, to feel, so to speak, the swish of the present. He is the born leader who conveys his will and idea to the many, seeing the banner of the ideal ahead so vividly as to make it one common vision of all, uniting them into one onward-moving body:

> "Give your strength and your deed
> where you nearest see need . . .
> We can lift up our land if we all lift together."

Bjørnson was born 8th December 1832, at Bjørgan Prestegaard, the parsonage of Kvikne, a mountain parish between the long Eastland valley of Østerdalen and the Trondheim district of Orkedal. Bjørgan lay too high up for corn to ripen, and was surrounded by snow seven or eight months of the year. Little Bjørnstjerne would stand on the parlour table and look out at the ski-runners rushing down to the valley, or come out to see the nomad Lapps arriving with their reindeer and boatlike sleighs, all eager to do some bargaining at the farm. Bjørnson has also related less peaceful reminiscences, as, for instance, of a local giant and fighter, who had come to pay the rector a visit, after the fashion of the rough old Reformation times, suddenly hurled out from his father's study, head over heels down the stairs. The rather savage population of this bleak mountain parish, who were largely descendants of immigrated miners from the Røraas copper-mining district, had for some years been without a pastor when Peder Bjørnson was appointed. The last one had simply fled, and no one had been willing to take his place. Peder Bjørnson was a strong man of

peasant stock from the interior of the country. He had been a farmer before he became a priest. The parson noticed with some concern that his son resembled his grandfather, Bjørn Skei, who had been an excellent *kjøgemester* (master of ceremonies at weddings and other parties), but had left his farm heavily mortgaged. Professor Collin—whose great work on Bjørnson we shall be making much use of—took the following notes from a talk with Bjørnson (in 1897), who said, speaking of his parents: "*She* was bright and light and fluttering. *He* could not find the words for what he felt most deeply. Not even for his love towards us children. He never told us how fond of us he was—only in the look he gave us when he was dying. He was one of those pent-up, unredeemed hearts who left a great portion of their powers to the following generations. He was of a straight and simple turn of mind. I may as well confess it: I have drawn them both—Mother in the housewife at Solbakken; she sat in a place the sun's rays bear on—and Father in Sæmund, who lived among the shadows of Granlien. It may be said that it was their faults and shortcomings that brought them together, as much as anything else. For faults are not always that of which it is so often sung and said that they should only be done away with. There is something good within the faults."

This is thoroughly Bjørnsonian. The endeavour of his life was to spin something whole and strong from the differing strands of inheritance, and he could not help seeing the history of his people as a working together of those two opposite elements in the nature of Norway: the dark and hard and cold with the mild and soft and fair.

When Bjørnstjerne was six years old the family moved to Nesset in Romsdalen, where graceful smiling slopes stretch along the fjord at the foot of grand mountains. The monotonous uplands were replaced by the contrasts of an alpine landscape. The boy would stand watching the sunlight on mountain and fjord till he cried as if he had done something wrong, or stopped on his ski in some wooded hollow and gaze spellbound and drawn with an immense longing to the beauty within, and—like Arne of his story—dreaming it to be there, "beyond the lofty mountains." But the weird magic of the scene might also drive him back to the warmth and light of home.

Old people who remembered him as a child agreed that he was a wild, headstrong boy, generally up to mischief, but good at heart. He would give away his clothes and anything. He made friends with all the cottars' children of the parsonage, and might spend the whole day with them in the fields, at work or play and in the cottage for meals. Thus he got as a child first-hand experience of the

peasants' way of life; the scenes and situations of the *Peasant Tales* come out of the author's own early memories.

Bjørnstjerne was first sent to the village clerk's school, and then the children had a tutor at home, who particularly impressed upon their minds the terrors of the Day of Judgment. The stern parson also had some pedagogical idea in taking his nine-year-old son to see an execution! Anyhow, the son became a lifelong opposer of capital punishment.

At the grammar school of Molde, the district town where he was sent at the age of ten, Snorre's *Sagas of the Kings*, and historical novels, became his favourite reading, and probably received more attention than his lessons. He loved this reading, and he loved to tell again what he read, in versions of his own, to the other boys, and to the farm labourers when he was at home in the holidays.

It was the reading of Wergeland that lead Bjørnson to the Sagas, and in his later schooldays he became strongly attracted towards Wergeland's own work. As he said in his speech at the unveiling of the Wergeland statue in Kristiania on the 17th of May 1881: "Thousands and thousands will declare with me that Wergeland was in our early childhood our only literary love, and later in life ever our deepest one."

In 1848 waves from the February Revolution reached the little fjord town, at least to the extent of raising much discussion, mainly among the young people. The destinies of the French Republic were earnestly debated in the school club. Bjørnson, in his handwritten magazine *Friheten* (Liberty), stood up for Lamartine as a president, while most of his comrades were in favour of Louis Napoleon. He wanted by all means to blow some life into the stagnant tranquillity of the little fishing-place, and may well have occasioned such scenes of riot as that described in the story of *The Fisher Lassie*, where the author enjoys representing the ordinary decent people as the disturbers of peace.

In 1850 Bjørnson came from Molde to Kristiania in order to prepare for university matriculation. He entered old Heltberg's so-called "Student Factory," an establishment run by a very original old Latin scholar (once Wergeland's friend), where young men from every part of the country came to be transformed into university students—a curious assembly of which Bjørnson gave a picture twenty years later: "There were bearded men of thirty side by side with youths who had failed and were trying again, peasant boys and seamen, bankrupt merchants who were studying on credit, serious students, swells who wanted to be able to flourish some Latin; all wishing to get their learning in a year or two instead of in six. Some hanging over their desks, some leaning against the

walls, a couple seated on each window-sill—altogether a strange crowd filling the two large rooms. At one end of the form there was the long, bony figure of Vinje, the later poet, already beginning to be known as a critic. Behind him, pale and intense, with a huge jet-black beard, sat Henrik Ibsen." Lastly we may add to this picture the strong, angular figure of Bjørnson himself, his thick red hair brushed back from his forehead into a towering peak, called by his fellow-students, after a mountain near his home, *Romsdalshorn*. At the top of the room old Heltberg, wrapped in skins against the gout and asthma, waved his manuscript Latin grammar, which was always growing and could never be printed. The spirit of the ancient classics he may not have been able to convey to all these different pupils ; but he made them *think*, and above all, he communicated to some of them his enthusiasm for language and style.

Bjørnson did not rise high in the ranks as regards book-learning ; but his bold, independent judgment, his straightforwardness and genial disposition soon made him liked and respected among his comrades. After his first visit to the theatre he strongly protested against the critique which Vinje had written of the play, and this was something hitherto unheard of ; notwithstanding, Vinje and he were soon intimate friends.

The students at Kristiania led a very sociable life. Some of them joined in a sort of colony, having a house together with some steady soul for their chosen house-master. Here Bjørnson was soon like a king surrounded by his men. After his *Examen Artium* he had taken up literary work for periodicals, much to the disappointment of his parents, who wanted him to become a clergyman.

It was an exception to the general rule of strict economy when Bjørnson one day came home with a twelve-year-old German, whom he had purchased from an organ-grinder in the street for ten dollars. The expenses were shared by the whole colony. Bjørnson would make a genius of the boy, the others a chemist. The majority had their way, and it is stated that the experiment proved completely successful.

The young journalist's first review, that of *A New-Year Book*—a collection of prose and verse by the leading Norwegian writers (*Morgenbladet*, 15/1–'54)—examines a general complaint of the prosaic materialism of the time, when poetry was merely burrowing underground in search of folklore. The reviewer predicts that a new race of poets is about to emerge. He is more favourable towards the prose-writers than towards the poets, and would rather accompany one of the former through realms of this earth than one

of the latter through those of his fancy. The poet towards whom Bjørnson is here most indulgent is Andreas Munch, representative of an exotic branch of belated Romanticism. Otherwise Bjørnson has little sympathy with the romantic flight from the daylight, and love for all kinds of sad night scenes, let alone talk with nixies and pixies and other nocturnal wights. He has no stomach for Welhaven's endless lament over the intellectual and moral poverty of the times and misery of this world in general, and his retreat to the beckoning solitude of the fir-woods, to the secluded tarn where he would drop his burden and tune his lyre. " The thousand-voiced jubilant *Yea!* with which Wergeland's fresh, ringing songs were greeted, should have convinced any one that sickly sentimentality is not wanted in our country. And this our most Norwegian poet sang in spite of the hundred times heavier weight that pressed on *his* life. . . . For they, Wergeland's enemies, had not so strong and deep-sucking roots in the people, and did not have to raise all its misery into themselves."

Bjørnson, from the beginning of his career, felt himself to be Wergeland's successor in the endeavour to free the national strivings from the weight of Danish influence and tradition. He found the foreign element perniciously dominant on the stage, where French and Danish vaudevilles were flourishing. He began by suggesting that the youthful parts should be played by young Norwegian actors, and that no new Danish actors should be appointed. Norway had need of her own Theatre, to hear her own voice again. She was growing the actors and the dramatists too. The Danes had taught us well and supplied great actors, thus helping us to establish a Norwegian stage, from which it was now time for them to retire. If it was to end well, it had better end soon.

For a few years Bjørnson's activity was mainly critical, showing remarkable insight for a man in his early twenties. He was doing his best to stir up what he and Ibsen agreed to call " the fiendish prosaic atmosphere about us." Kristiania was, as it were, catching its first train in the age of machinery, and had no time for poets. In the building up of the new Norway, industrial and intellectual activities were long separated, harshly contrasted like lights and shadows on a new earth before an atmosphere has harmonized them. Bjørnson himself became in time our greatest reconciler of the poetic and practical spirit. In his student days he wrote as editor of the students' *Union Magazine*: " When the fresh currents of life do not flow in through the open window, ruffle the leaves of the student's book, blow the dust from off it, and at times make one lose the open place, then study will acquire a weary page-for-page step, bringing no health to the soul."

Bjørnson's early efforts towards the nationalization of the theatre at Kristiania for the time culminated when in the spring of 1856 a new Danish actor was received at his first appearance by a discordant medley of sounds from a band of several hundred students, clerks, schoolboys, and teachers, conducted by Bjørnson, who gave the tone on a huge Scottish watchman's whistle. The second evening there was a pitched battle, and the theatre audience and the public in general learned that a new will had arisen among them, backed by young and growing forces. It was a victory for the national cause, although the immediate reaction from the annoyed bourgeoisie was unpleasant enough for the chief disturber to be thankful to get away for the time, as a correspondent to *Morgenbladet* on the Scandinavian students' summer tour to Upsala, a journey which was to become a signal event in his life.

The sight of the historical cities of Sweden evoked feelings in him which he longed to give expression to. But he got no further yet than to the foot of the platform, where he listened rapt to all the orators, and vowed that he would himself become one. "All, all was sun and greatness : with flowers in my lap and visions before me I sat in prayer to God that I might become a poet."

He returned to his home—Søgne, in the South of Norway, where his father was now rector—wrote the play *Mellem Slagene* (Between the Battles) in a fortnight, and with the manuscript packed in his trunk proceeded to Copenhagen. He needed to be for a while in a place where there was a more sensitive comprehension of poetry, and a fuller tradition of art, than at home. We get glimpses of him at the artists' café, where he came, like Nordahl Brun and his friends of *Det Norske Selskab*. With his towering personality and easy poetic expression he not only held his own against superior wit and learning, but soon became the central figure of the circle. He was already beginning to acquire his exceptional mastery of expression, which, together with a developed art of delivery and gesture, was to make him in time our greatest popular orator. One of the most striking things with regard to Bjørnson is his lifelong *growth*, rising stage by stage, the last one never left behind, but included in the progress. We see the critic followed by and taken up into the poet, and both at last into the master artist of life, who treats ethical and social problems from a higher point of view, reached by patient study of contemporary philosophy. Through all his authorship he is borne along by the desire to make life warmer, lighter, and happier for his fellow men.

During his stay in Denmark from 1856 to 1857, Bjørnson continued his historical dramatic work in *Halte-Hulda* ; but here, in the place of rebirth of Norwegian national feeling in the previous

century, it is as though the poet acquires a clearer, more comprehensive view of the still, strong life led *in the present* in the valleys of his native land. By placing together remarks of Bjørnson's at different times, Professor Collin has found that he received on his journey home from Denmark, in the summer of 1857, three vivid Nature impressions, each of which in due time grew into a magnificent poem: the Ocean as—in *Arnljot Gelline*—

> " . . . it rolls in its calm and grandeur,
> its burden of mountainous fog-banks bearing,
> forever wandering and returning." [1]

Then the sight of Norway rising out of the sea, furrowed, weather-bitten, but sheltering its thousand homes, as he before long sang of it in the song that has become our national anthem. Lastly, on his way from Kristiansand to his parents' home at Søgne Parsonage, Bjørnson saw the heather, juniper, birch, and fir climbing up the rock; and the sight blended with his memory of Wergeland's verse about the trees entwining to cover the shortcomings of their Mother, into a vision of the Norwegian peasant's labour through the centuries, often beaten back as by avalanches, to clothe the native rock. This picture was to frame the story of Arne, and it forms the background of his peasant tales as a whole. Bjørnson sees Norwegian nature in his characters, the hard and sombre element blending with the mild and sunny. He shared the peasant's view in so far as he disliked the wild and violent in landscape; he wanted Nature humanized, and was more attracted by the rich, fertile valley than by the barren grandeur of the mountains. Nature mainly serves as a magnifying mirror in which he studies the peasant's mind. Bjørnson's tales, as Professor Collin has pointed out, inaugurated a new art of co-ordinated and mutually illuminating representations of Nature and the human soul. This was the first literary form where his many-sided genius found itself at home.

In the time of romantic interest in the country-people, artists and poets had contributed to a large illustrated work, *Bondeliv i Norge*. It gave a panorama of Norwegian landscape and placed the peasants in a true setting, with costumes and utensils all correct; but it resembled a museum catalogue: life and motion were not there. On the whole the one-sided material brought to light by the artists and folklorists had tended to preserve exaggerated ideas as to the excellent qualities of the *bonde*, and expectations were somewhat disappointed when the *bønder* began to play a part in political life, to figure as a party in the Storting. The results of closer investigation of country conditions, published in the reports of

[1] *Poems and Songs*, translated by A. Hubbell Palmer.

economists and physicians, were further calculated to produce criticism of the peasants' old-fashioned and uneconomical husbandry, and of their rude and insanitary ways of life. The consequent reaction in the general view of peasant life was part of the general disillusion of the romanticists in the early fifties. In England George Eliot remarks ironically on "idyllic villagers" who "dance in the checkered shade and refresh themselves, not immoderately, with spicy nut-brown ale." Welhaven, who in 1846 in his speech in memory of the forefathers had congratulated Norway on her maintaining the force of ancient times, in 1854, on a similar occasion, expressed very different feelings: "There is doubt in the air; it passes in and out with our breath. Doubt has entered our blood like a fever, exciting and exhausting us." Through this cloud of pessimism Bjørnson's peasant tales broke like a shaft of sunlight, in *Synnøve Solbakken*, *Arne*, and *A Happy Boy*, with varied tones, now darker, now brighter, with a number of shorter pieces between them, and ending with the beautiful harmony of *The Bridal March*.

Synnøve Solbakken appeared during the summer of 1857 in the numbers of *Illustreret Folkeblad*, which Bjørnson edited. In the autumn it was offered by the author as payment of a debt to the publisher and bookseller at Kristiania, Johan Dahl, who eventually agreed to print it on the cheapest paper, as it was already in type. It is the simple story of how the wild and violent nature of Thorbjørn Granlien is step by step conquered and saved by the gentle, kind-hearted girl Synnøve, from the time of childhood when Thorbjørn gazes across from his dark home to where the Solbakken houses lay beaming on their "sunny hill," until at last he comes himself and can look back from there to his Granlien home. Bjørnson seemed to see the conflict of Paganism and Christianity still going on in our valleys; but the powers of light—here seen concentrated in Woman and in the Church—have, since the Saga-times, grown more than those of darkness; and thus nationality itself appears to him as an everlasting advance through struggle. And he is not sorry to think that the Norseman's fibre *needed* a mildening and chastening influence. The fair figure of Synnøve has grown up in contrast to the dark heroine of his drama *Halte-Hulda*—as something like woman the peace-weaver, the *freoðuwebbe* of Old English poetry, in contrast to our Saga's strife-awakener among men. While Bjørnsons's national historical plays largely tend towards a tragic conclusion, his tales of peasant life lead to reconciliation and happiness in the end.

Bjørnson declared it to be his intention to use the past to throw light on the present, and the present to throw light on the past, and this plan he executed in his parallel series of historical plays

and peasant tales. A *rapprochement* between the past and the present had been inaugurated by Ivar Aasen's demonstration of the nearness of the dialects to the Old Norse, and by the painter Tidemand's peasant figures, great and clear-cut, though somewhat stereotyped. His grave, contained, powerful men and mild, fair women are all serious and solemn, with a strong, idealizing overlight falling upon them. Bjørnson, no doubt, learnt from Tidemand to see some of the large lines in the personalities of the peasants, but the poet's greater wealth of imagination, as well as closer acquaintance with his subject, saved him from lapsing into a stereotyped manner. He seized on one feature of national character which he saw to be more than anything else a point of contact with the past: the peculiar Norse reticence and extreme brevity of speech, letting acts to the greatest possible extent take the place of words. With his pronounced dramatic instinct Bjørnson made a very wide use of this native talent for silence—with the striking result that his characters become exceedingly alive and present to the reader.

This rustic reserve, which Bjørnson was the first to make use of in our literature, has its natural counterpart in the lyrical pieces which are interspersed in the story. Contrasting with Ingrid's sunny, dancing ditty of *The Fox and the Hare* (see p. 8) comes *Synnøve's Song*, sorrowful and resigned, when she has understood from Thorbjørn that they cannot belong to one another. The lyrical, musical outbursts spring naturally from amidst this aridity of expression. Where the closest psychological analysis would fail, they render the long thoughts of youth.

Criticism, particularly that of a later time, declared the picture not to be true, mistaking its tones for purely those of Romanticism. Realism sees truth in a number of surface aspects, trying to fix the moment in a detailed mosaic. But to the poet things appear less as being than as becoming. States and stages are of less importance than the inner shaping soul and aspiration. And the poet has to voice what he feels to be there, deep in the life of the people. The charm of Bjørnson's tales, with their moods of light and shade over the fresh, meagre nature of the country, the straight, faithful characters of its simple homes, the affections causing the young men to conquer the roving propensities of their race and to become peaceful builders of their land—this peculiar charm in the last resort derives from the fact that he loved the Norwegian peasants and desired to get down to the roots and show what was strongest in their nature and deserved to live continually. He felt down to the Human qualities, and the National characteristics are naturally evolved through life as manifested in those surroundings. With all its idealization the picture is deeply true.

From his home at Søgne, Bjørnson could, in quiet, read the reviews as they came, amongst others a condescending one by the University professor of philosophy, M. J. Monrad, who would not tread on the few pale shoots of our national literature. But if academic criticism was mainly cool and sceptical, the public at large proved the best judge by its immediate acknowledgment of the book as a word spoken out of its own heart. The general opinion was that though the earlier poets had found and pictured the land, Bjørnson was the first to people it.

Bjørnson was now twenty-five years old, had " broken through " as a poet with his first two works, and life to him was, as he said, foaming champagne. He had to an exceptional degree the faculty of drawing from the environment just what he at a particular stage needed for his own growth. Thus he *grew* the characters of his stories as organs of his own, as tentacles of experience in this direction and that.

The second of his longer tales, *Arne*, was largely written on a farm in the deep, sombre valley of Eikisdal, in the summer of 1858, after Bjørnson had become engaged to KAROLINE REIMERS, a young Bergen actress, whom he married in September of the same year. Both for character study and for poetic beauty of detail, *Arne* is an advance on *Synnøve Solbakken*, although the story may not be quite so well knit together and rounded. The tenor of the series of tales as a whole is, as before hinted, given in the opening chapter of *Arne* : the shrubs and trees climbing up to clothe the mountain, failing and trying again till they reach the ridge and are there met by others from the other side, realizing at last what success is like. In Baard Bøen the author has drawn one of his best peasant portraits. He is a gentle, slow, careful, awkward man, who, much against his will, shocks and stumbles against everybody. When his daughter is ill, and his wife lets him know that his help is not wanted, " he looked at them both for a long while, put on his fur cap with both hands, turned and went."

Arne is a piece of stern self-education ; for Bjørnson had *his* heredity to cope with, his struggles with his own violent nature, before he gained that art of life which the Norsemen called *dygd* (cf. Lat. *virtus*), and found his noblest field for a great-minded (*hugstor*) man within the boundaries of home and country. Two kinds of flight from reality are here dealt with : on the one hand that of the dreamy idealist who tries to escape from the prose of the everyday world, lacking the courage or energy to make it poetic ; on the other hand, the strenuous, faithful worker's failing to grasp the scattered golden moments of festival, keeping them instead locked up like Ingerid Sletten's coif till " not even a thread remained."

The story of Øivind, *A Happy Boy*, who "cried when he was born, but laughed as soon as he sat up on his mother's lap," is wholly in the major key. The first chapter contains some delightfully simple child-verses, which, together with Wergeland's, are the pearls of our nursery rhymes. This story is less lyrical than the preceding ones. Clear and strong and full of good feeling is the Saga of the cottar's son, who, with the help of his old friend the schoolmaster, rids himself of the bitterness and defiant vanity which reflections on his social standing have produced, and who through his work gains a position of importance in the district and wins the girl friend of his childhood, Marit.

The collected tales were published in 1872. They contain, among other things, a vivid picture from Bjørnson's childhood, under the title of *Blakken*, the strong horse at Nesset parsonage, and a fine study of politics in peasant life, *Jernbanen og Kirkegaarden*, of the railway that was at last laid over the churchyard. An additional peasant tale, his last one, *Brudeslaatten*, composed round four pictures by Tidemand and dedicated to H. C. Andersen, appeared in the following year. Bjørnson here seems desirous of showing more conclusively that there is one thing that can undo the dumb reserve of the Norwegian, and that is the mutual finding of souls in love. The story moves, to the notes of the old Bridal March, sometimes harsh and threatening, sometimes mild and beaming, till at last it wheels exultantly in the sunshine over bride and bridegroom and the whole gay procession.

As we have seen, Bjørnson from the first placed his hope for the education of his people in that alliance of the arts whose common arena is the stage; in this arena he was soon playing an active part, both as a playwright and, from 1857 to 1859, as manager of Ole Bull's newly established theatre in Bergen.

In this work the question of language occupied him much. He wanted the players to bring their diction as near as possible to everyday speech. By his active interest in a genuine Norwegian enunciation he brought out the greater sonority and distinctness of our language compared with the suppler Danish tongue, and in this way provided his actors with one advantage to compensate the maturer art of the Danes.

Although Bjørnson had from boyhood read the Sagas, Oehlenschläger had—since the time when he at school had read aloud from *Hakon Jarl*, pale with enthusiasm—seemed to him the greatest interpreter of the old heroic age; and he was of the opinion that the Danish dramatist, whose influence had after his death slowly waned, could be regenerated on the Norwegian stage. Besides Norwegian and Danish plays, Bjørnson among other things pro-

duced Sheridan's *School for Scandal.* He already speaks confidently of a new Problem Drama which was to treat the great enigmas of life. As yet, however, the public both in Bergen and in Kristiania, where Ibsen was now a stage manager, cared for nothing but lighter entertainment. Bjørnson's own first contribution to the Norwegian drama, *Between the Battles,* had been performed at Christiania Theater, and made a great impression. Vinje, who was present, remarked, "That is it, that is *norsk*!" At Bergen the play was performed on the anniversary of the foundation of the theatre, 2nd January 1858.

The subject of this play, as of all Bjørnson's national historical dramas, is taken from the period of civil wars raging in Norway in the 12th century. Both here and in a later play, *King Sverre* (1861), we are shown the picture of this king, the most far-seeing and kingly of Norwegian monarchs, who unfortunately had to spend his energies in merely establishing his power. Sverre came as a disturber, placing himself at the head of a small band of defeated insurgents, the *Birkebeiner.* With extraordinary courage and endurance he managed to discipline this rough horde and get them through the most difficult situations. In return they looked up to him as to a supernatural being, whilst his enemies, the nobles and their king, who were ousted in spite of superior numbers and armament, thought him in league with evil powers, if he were not the very fiend incarnate. It was not till he was worn out and dying, that he had conquered the last opposition—at a heavy cost to the nation. Bjørnson, the poet, sees a fellow in the king, "who holds out in spite of all the horrors of hell, who throws off jest and jibe on every side and stands on his own blood-stained fields delivering gay speeches, and who rises in counsel with calm and dignity. I know him. His soul is strong; he will hold out until at last both God and man shall recognize that it was the *good* that he wanted to do." Both king and poet are misunderstood, fighting as they are for ideals that lie beyond the ken of the multitude whom they would benefit.

Between the Battles was written in the broad, powerful prose style of the Sagas. However, Bjørnson was not as yet confident that it would adapt itself to larger dramatic work, and his next play, *Halte-Hulda* (1858), he wrote in blank verse, in the manner of Oehlenschläger, really with the idea of bringing the personages of the Saga nearer to the present. At the same time Ibsen made use of a still more pronounced Saga style in *Hærmændene paa Helgeland* (The Warriors at Helgeland). It is interesting to observe how in these two historical dramas the authors have chosen the same subject: the passionate, unscrupulous woman of the Sagas, who

loves the most gallant warrior. He, though strongly attracted to this *valkyrie,* is held back by the gentle influence of an innocent young girl. The revenge is unremitting : Hjørdis in *The Warriors* kills Sigurd with her arrow and throws herself into the sea ; Hulda in Bjørnson's drama gets Eyolf's enemies to surround and burn the hall where she has enticed him to meet her, and she herself chooses to die with him. Differently from Ibsen, who shows mainly the dire results of unrequited love, Bjørnson treats fully the passion of his heroine, who brings death to whomsoever looks too long upon her beauty. She is waiting impatiently :

> " ' Come, come ! my Eyolf. Say why do you tarry ?
> The woodcock 'mongst the firs already coos ;
> the mist is leaving, clad in silver mantle
> the mountain lake, and through the evening air
> is gliding softly to another couch.
> Soon stands each flower, which it hurried by,
> with dewy cheek, and trembling calls to mind
> the fair dream-vision that so swiftly fled.
> Come now, come now ! Must I alone then wait,
> I who have not a moment, no, not one,
> to give away,—I who through four and twenty
> long years have waited for you only, Eyolf ! ' "

The leading critic, J. L. Heiberg, who ruled taste in Copenhagen, rejected both *Halte-Hulda* and *Hærmændene* at the Royal Theatre : " A Norwegian drama will scarcely proceed from the laboratory of such experiments. The Danish theatre fortunately has no need for them." From Christiania Theater they were also returned after a year's consideration, because one could not afford such a risky venture.

Bjørnson had determined to hold out as long as he could at the " Cape of Good Hope " as he named his theatre outpost in Bergen. In the election campaign in 1859 he entered the lists in politics. With his faculty of seizing the right moment, and bringing his powers to bear at the point where they would be most telling, he took the lead of the Liberal opposition, which was turned principally against tendencies of amalgamation with Sweden. The 17th of May was a day of triumph ; Bjørnson marched at the head of the procession, side by side with Ole Bull, an illustration of his own definition of the poet : " The poet radiates joy from the whole of his person, gives out words like sunlight, helps to arrange life. To be able to say words at the right time, words that flame—that is to be a poet." [1]

His friends were mainly old friends of Wergeland, and so were some of the members of the Storting now elected. Here he must

[1] For Bjørnson's relation to Walt Whitman, cf. p. 182.

have felt that the heroes of the past were with him while he drew up his new host. This may have been the spring in which he chose *April* for him :

" April I choose for me ;
for then what's old is falling,
for then what's new gets root-hold ;
it causes some commotion :
peace, though, is not the highest,
but that one something wills.

April I choose for me,
because 'tis storming, sweeping,
because 'tis smiling, melting,
because it fosters power,
because it tumbles forces,—
and then is summer made."

This new departure, in politics, was not favourable to his theatre work. In the autumn of 1859 he left for Kristiania to take over the political editorship of the radical paper *Aftenbladet*. Then he met Ibsen again, who was manager of *Det Norske Theater*, and, wonderful to say, prevailed on him to take part—for the first and last time in his life—in the foundation of a society, *Det Norske Selskab*, for friends of an entire Norwegian art. At the weekly evenings of this new Norwegian Society, Bjørnson would be seen talking politics with the Liberal leader, Johan Sverdrup ; Lindeman, the composer, played the piano ; while Ole Bull beamed from his cosy corner, and Henrik Ibsen walked about nodding to his own inner observations.

Bjørnson was at once in the midst of political controversy. On the first of October the Liberal Storting was opened, and on that day Bjørnson's national song, *Ja, vi elsker*, appeared in *Aftenbladet*, dedicated to the new King, Carl. The question which united all Norwegians just then, was the so-called *Statholderstrid*. They objected to the clause in the constitution according to which the King might appoint a Governor for Norway. There ensued a sort of diplomatic game of chess between the Governments of Norway and Sweden, the two parties having the King in common, and at the same time a quite open and undiplomatic fight between the popular opinions of both countries. As a result of the four months' match, Norway, it was said, " remained in possession of the King's wishes, Sweden of his acts." Bjørnson wrote vigorously during the *Statholder* struggle. His finest contribution was perhaps his song : " Do you hear what Sweden's saying, youth of Norway, now ? " Bjørnson's cousin, Richard Nordraak, composed a tune to it, from which he a few years later evolved that of *Ja, vi elsker*.

Bjørnson's articles in *Aftenbladet* were not very diplomatic. He was always for openness and hated what he called trick-and-wriggle politics. His outspokenness was such that the responsible leaders were forced to disavow him. He got his notice, the owners giving as their reason that the business people refused to advertise in such an ultra-radical paper. Bjørnson was sacrificed as the scapegoat. But the same man, the advocate Dunker, who caused him to withdraw from the political arena, procured for him a Government grant of 500 dollars, which enabled him to make a journey to the South of Europe. And the three years which he now spent abroad were of great importance for his future.

Bjørnson's first impression of the Mediterranean shores was at Trieste, where about the harbour he recognized the figures of the Odyssey. In the Cathedral of Milan he saw the organ as a singing mountain rising into a snow-white Halleluiah. "It is sometimes as though the ground burns beneath my feet," he wrote in December 1861; "what I have to see and to learn is so much, and my time and my means are so limited. The rich sights inspire all matter with new creative thought, and a life then demands form."

Bjørnson was now thirty years of age. From Italy he was sending home dramatic works treating of the early ages of Norwegian history right up to his final flourish, *Sigurd Jorsalfar* (Sigurd the Crusader, 1872)—vigorous and elemental works, with the sense of youth in them, "youth's blood and youth's courage, colouring all the world and singing all the way." He felt strongly at this time that a small nation had much need to commune with its own earlier life, and in his present surroundings he saw many of the old facts in a new light. In his own words: "When one has filled one's mind in long calm draughts from the foreign source of beauty, an ease and transparency falls on our old thoughts and materials, so that one sees them for the first time without those rags of mist in which one feared strange lurking apparitions; indeed, one often no more knows where they lay, or that one ever saw things otherwise." At the same time he writes: "All that I am now working at is only the introduction to something else, into which I feel that my whole being will be taken up: the domestic drama. If I could write it at once I would do it, but I have not a sufficiently large and supple experience, and if I had, I should not get the quiet until my historical plays have received my unrest, my dreams, my visions. Before that I could not write three scenes without bursting them with pathos and reflections. When shall I be prepared for what I feel to be my true vocation?"

He was convinced that he would need at least two years of continuous exertion in order to master form and style as he wanted

to. He had a sense of coming short in some respects, as with regard to calm, sustained treatment, to humour and easy jest. Pathos he had, and passion; but he felt, as he expressed it, that a thorough bath in lyrical poetry would help him more than anything else, especially when it went together with a deep immersion in the antique. "There is no place on earth where one is driven forwards in every direction as one is here; for all these immense fragments of a thousand years of History crave for coherence."

The "lyrical bath" was mainly taken in the same waters from which he drew his Saga dramas: *e.g.* the great poem *Arnljot Gelline*, the first part of which was written in 1860, and which was not completed till ten years later; the majestic ballad of *Olav Trygg-vason*; the passionate but contained and dignified mourning of *Bergljot*; and the songs and other lyrical passages of *Sigurd Slembe*.

His thoughts had been gathering about the figure of a Norseman who roamed over Europe, one of the boldest but also most unfortunate of the pretenders to the throne in the civil wars of the 12th century: *Sigurd Slembe*. He had made careful studies, travelling where his hero had wandered, and seeing what he had seen—and here the company of the historian P. A. Munch was of great help to him. Out of this tragic history emerged a dramatic trilogy—the first part written in blank verse, the second and third in prose—picturing different stages in the life of a hero whom his country cannot use. Sigurd stands alone, in the superiority of his right: "I lower no weakness down as a rope-ladder for others to climb up to me. . . . The law leads up to me, but that path no one any longer has the strength to go." Hardened in his heart, he craves the hate of his few followers, and not their love. He has heard the echo of evil in Nature and will not stop calling. When he sees that his cause is lost, he thinks one moment of ending his own life: "Death!—the thought flew open like a door ringing on its hinges—Light, air, receive me!" But he resolves to die at the head of his men. On the eve of his torture and death Sigurd lies with his head resting in his mother's lap, while the crusaders' song sounds to him as it has done at previous crises of his life.

Sigurd Slembe is Bjørnson's greatest Saga drama. The first part was written last—to unite the other two—in the Tyrol, when Bjørnson with his family was returning to the North. His wife and little boy had come to Rome during the last period of his stay, and had, as he said, "given him much joy and much poetry." He felt so happy, and felt so many things growing in him that he came home like a new man, as if just starting life.

CHAPTER XI

BJØRNSTJERNE BJØRNSON, THE LYRIC AND PROBLEM POET

ON his return from the South, Bjørnson was received with an annual grant of 400 dollars from the Storting, a welcome and gratifying token of the nation's acknowledgment. There is an extraordinary life and colour in the first play which he now composed: *Maria Stuart i Skotland* (1864). The young Queen amidst the warring parties of Catholics and Protestants is the point on which the action turns—her feeling of isolation, her powerlessness to control the factions. This Queen Mary is not a passionate woman; she finds Rizzio's love ludicrous, and looks upon Darnley as a rude boy; Bothwell only for a moment carries her away with his manly vigour. The lack of historical accuracy is compensated by the author's understanding sympathy with the Scottish national character (perhaps partly due to his acquaintance with the Norwegian Puritans, *Haugianerne*), and by his realization of the exuberant Renaissance spirit. After the first performance of the play, in 1867, Bjørnson declared: "This has been a joy that I have not in all my literary life experienced the like of."

Bjørnson appears to have often taken a peculiar delight in portraying weak, diffident characters and finding an explanation for them. Darnley, for instance, characterizes himself in these words: "William, the world despises the weak; for it admires power, even though it be the power to do evil. . . . Ah, if they only understood the weak man! He is weak because there is something in his inmost soul towards which he is faithful, a longing, a memory, a love. He knows that it is his perdition, he makes a thousand efforts to free himself; but his feelings are too deep—he holds on and sinks."

In 1865 Bjørnson had accepted the situation as stage-manager at Christiania Theater, after some debate as to the limits of his authority—a question which two years later caused him to retire and return to journalism. These two years were a great time in the history of the theatre. Bjørnson was a splendid instructor

and gained the full confidence of his actors. His choice of plays supplied them with worthy tasks, and proved very popular with the public. Old actors were said in later times to speak of Bjørnson as the Invalides did of Napoleon.

In a play which he wrote in this second period as stage-manager, *De Nygifte* (The Newly Married Couple, 1865), Bjørnson for the first time took his subject from the present. It was one rather well worn in the European novel—the mental change in a young girl when she leaves her parents' house to follow her husband. Up to this moment, even after her marriage, she has remained in the first place the daughter. Only when she has lived some time in her new home does it dawn on her that in the first place she should be a wife. The contrast in the general atmosphere when coming from the preceding play, *Mary Stuart,* is as great as can be ; but Bjørnson could not tone his diction down so suddenly to suit modern conversation. In the Renaissance drama expressions like " Thoughts festively clad as for a tryst," or " Walking in the fresh morning air of resolve," may be in place ; but in the language of the living present, " It breathes out of your mood as from a flower " appears somewhat high-flown. However, the poet's serious work in realistic drama and novel during the following years soon sobered and tempered his style.

Realism in the Scandinavian literatures received a strong urge from the war in 1864, when Denmark was mauled by Germany and Austria while her Scandinavian brethren were merely looking on. Bjørnson wrote to H. C. Andersen that the production of poetry had now become impossible—at least at home. We know that the disappointment was one of the incentives to Ibsen's *Brand* and *Peer Gynt.* Ibsen could so much more easily place himself outside as an immovable solitary eye ; Bjørnson was himself beaten and confounded with the Scandinavians. Scandinavianism, which had flourished up to the time of the war, had received a stunning blow. Bjørnson had joined heartily in this movement as far as the *rapprochement* meant mutual help on the basis of independent development ; but the preservation of nationality in any league was to him a matter of the first importance : the more each developed himself, the more he would be able to help the others.

To Ibsen all collective groups, from the family up to " Mankind," appeared mainly as hindrances to the development of the individual. To Bjørnson's mind the question of hindrance or development would depend much on the individual himself. Bjørnson felt strongly attracted to Ibsen ; but, as is usual with men of that calibre, at close quarters they could not get on well with one another. The most remarkable thing about these two con-

temporaneous writers is the way in which they supplement each other: both lovers of *truth*—one, the individualist, of truth for truth's sake—the other, with stress on the word *lover*, desiring above all to foster truth in his people, "*elske det frem*," make it grow by his love; both lovers of *light*—Ibsen, the scientific mind, because of its rendering things clear—Bjørnson, the genial seminarist, because of its making things grow.

As to what decided the literary *genus* of his productions, Bjørnson once said to Professor Collin: "I see some situation first, and build outward from that core. If the situation is strongly dramatic, the work will be a drama."

It was from Rome again that Bjørnson sent home his first serious attempts in the modern drama: *Redaktøren* (The Editor) and *En Fallit* (A Bankruptcy), both in 1875. The *Editor* treats of the evil, demoralizing influence of the press when led by unscrupulous persons. All who in any way support a paper coming from such a person's hand are joining in a lie. For those only are suited for politics in whom every atom of humanity has been killed, and who have become thoroughly petrified.[1] There is in the *Editor* much that is personal: Bjørnson had often been attacked by the sharp pen of the Conservative editor, J. Friele (whom he refers to as "Friele and other evils"). The play said too many disagreeable things to be a success in Kristiania. It was only performed at a second-rate theatre, and against the author's will; the sensation it caused was of a kind rather unpleasant to the author.

With the second drama of manners, *A Bankruptcy*, Bjørnson surprised the public by introducing money-matters on the stage. The question put is whether a merchant is morally justified in going on with his business when he knows that his means are no longer sufficient to cover his liabilities. We look into a luxurious home, where every one is at his wits' end as to how to be delivered this day from his daily tedium. The poor tired housewife is in despair about finding something new and nice for dinner. In the midst of it all moves the nervous, agitated Consul Tjælde, who is on the brink of ruin, and whose last desperate hope is to impose once more on the banks of the capital. An influential banker and business connection is coming, and an imposing dinner-party has to be arranged: "But this must be the last time, the last make-believe—no more of that!" Following upon the extravagant dinner scene comes the dramatic interview between Tjælde and the lawyer, Advocate Behrens, in Tjælde's office, where the business magnate,

[1] The subject is taken up again with greater humanity and art in *Paul Lange og Tora Parsberg*, twenty-four years later.

through a clear, cold, merciless exposition of the facts, is at last driven to see that the only thing for him to do is to surrender his estate and stand forward an honest man although ruined. A ray of humour breaks in on the ensuing judgment scene when the eldest daughter, Valborg, remarks at the hasty departure of her sister's fiancé: "Every rich house has its lieutenant. That was the last of ours." The house is broken up, but the home holds. The bankrupt, aided by his family, goes back to work anew, in order to pay the whole of his debt and redeem his honour and the good name of his family.

In *Kongen* (The King, 1877) Bjørnson propounds his republicanism. A young king is awakening to the falseness of his position, and finds that he cannot in any way act like a free human being, but that he is surrounded on every side by shams and conventions. "No one can think and feel with his people who lives separated from it in a great palace with a foreign princess. There can be no national form of life within a kotowing court." He endeavours to democratize the monarchy, breaks with the aristocracy and the bureaucrats, and is intent on marrying a young woman of his people. But he finds himself pinned down to the throne from all sides: the Church sees in the King the stronghold of faith, the military the bulwark of the country, commercialism the key of its cash-box, while officialdom sees in him its last defence against growing subversive tendencies. Bjørnson here seizes the royal mantle and spreads it over the people's shoulders, to inspire the people itself with the sense of majesty and responsibility. He was highly impatient with those who jeered at the poet-politician. All that concerned mankind concerned him, and he would be more proud of having contributed ever so little towards the improvement of the conditions of life than of any poet's laurels.

In a letter to his wife from Rome, in which he refers to his coming dramatic work on modern subjects, Bjørnson had added: "But my tales I will not forget, only I shall remove them from the peasant's home into our own." *Fiskerjenten* (The Fisher Lassie, 1868), fresh with reminiscences from boyhood days at Molde, is a first step of transition towards a broader realism. *Magnhild* (1877), the story of a young woman with a mission of which she is herself unconscious, that simply of being a straightforward, natural woman, shows a great advance towards the genial breadth of style which characterizes his mature art. Here he might find himself answering to the words used of Prince Haakon in *King Sverre*:

> "Norwegian language, so all scholars say,
> was never written yet with greater learning,
> more fine in feeling, bold and straight in thought."

"To be in truth"—*aa være i sandhet*—was the motto which Bjørnson would see at the head of all his work. In the play *Leonarda* (1879) the plea is for social tolerance; in *Det Ny System* (1879) it is pointed out how difficult it is for a young large-minded man to make his career in a small country, where only small truths are tolerated. In Ibsen the champion of truth—the enemy of the people—is isolated and overcome, in Bjørnson he always ends by gaining general recognition:

"Despisèd by the great ones,
but cherished by the low—
Say, is not that the way on which
the new must always go?
Betrayed by those who should keep watch,—
ay, just by them betrayed,—
was it not ever thus a truth
its first appearance made?

Beginning like a whisper
in the corn a summer's day,
and rising to a rumour through
the leafy wood's array,
until the ocean bears it off
with voice of thunder stirred—
when nothing but the truth, at last,
when nothing else is heard!"

En Handske (1883) is a gauntlet flung down to a society which puts a lesser moral demand to men than to women. Bjørnson shortly after in his novel, *Det Flager i Byen og paa Havnen* (Flags are Flying in Town and Harbour, 1884), proposed a remedy in education. Thomasine Rendalen has married John Kurt, the last of a line of violent debauched foreigners who had tyrannized the town. She is delivered of her brutal husband by his sudden death and now looks forward with apprehension to the prospect of becoming the mother of a Kurt. For the sake of her own race she will live and try to bend her child's character. After burning all the portraits of the ancestral Kurts, she turns the great, gloomy mansion into a girls' school. She places her headstrong boy, Thomas, with the girls, so that he may be cured of hereditary tendencies to consider himself the lord of creation. Thomas Rendalen in time becomes a teacher at the school. Besides a certain nervous capriciousness the heritage of the Kurts remains with him as a kind of immoderation in virtue—a strong downward tendency turned violently upwards. The educational programme, with which he scandalizes the little town, is that of Herbert Spencer: that the most important thing for a human being is

to be able to take care of itself, and the next in importance to know how to take care of the progeny. Here candour is needed in education; entire knowledge is the best builder of life and character.

There is in this claim for full daylight everywhere a certain lack of a finer sense of proportion and an undeveloped perception of the proper place for shade. Such exaggeration may, however, be justified in a work with a purpose, and Thomas Rendalen's admission of his pedagogic one-sidedness is cleverly postponed to the last page. The somewhat heavy subject is enlivened throughout with bright descriptions of schoolgirl life.

In the same year as *A Gauntlet* was thrown out, Bjørnson completed in Paris a short but highly interesting drama, *Over Ævne, I* (1883), intended to be the first of a series of plays which were to point to aspects of civilization which are in reality "beyond human power." Here it is the mystical element in Christianity, the fond trust in miracles, which is thus characterized.

As quite a young man, Bjørnson had heard the Danish prophet, Grundtvig, and had been conquered by this personification of a faith. The childlike happy religion of this old giant, blending Christianity with a faith in national life and in the mission of the Scandinavian peoples, with Bjørnson at the time took poetic shape in the figure of *Arnljot Gelline*, the great outlaw of the border mountains who is converted to Christianity and falls under King Olav's standard at Stiklestad.

In this orthodox Christian period of his life (lasting till he was between forty and forty-five years of age), Bjørnson did not care to discuss new ideas from science and philosophy; he took the questions far too seriously to approach them superficially, without thorough knowledge. After years of study of the works of Mill, Spencer, Darwin, Taine, and Renan—with Georg Brandes leading and urging him on—the time came when Bjørnson got "eyes that saw and ears that heard"; the faith of his forefathers fell within him, and great was the fall of it. The sweeping character of the change in his religious ideas seems to be connected with the poet's essentially imaginative faith. Such a mind spontaneously creates idols that can only be violently overthrown through the cumulative pressure of new facts, and cannot become gradually transfigured, as is the case with that more abstract and less pictorial vision which goes hand in hand with personal development, so that when one is a man one thinks as a man.

As Darwinism replaced Grundtvigianism, the poet formed his new image round the same centre in his being. Towards the end

of his life he defined Religion as " the ideal force which holds our conscience." He was soon in heated discussion with the theologians, and wrote a number of controversial articles.[1] His first work of art treating these questions was the little story *Støv* (Dust), written in 1882. " By dust I mean principally that which has been, but which is now dissolved, and which floats about and settles on open surfaces. . . . In healthy individuals it only produces a haze, so that in certain directions they cannot see clearly. . . . If there comes no motion into it, it may settle inch thick until the machinery is almost clogged."

The story is set in the peaceful picture of a Norwegian winter landscape. But " there is mildness in the air. Against the pale snow the fjord comes rolling in, threatening, blue."

The above mentioned drama, *Over Ævne, I*, which appeared between the educational studies *Flags are Flying* and *Dust*, is characteristic of Bjørnson's wide sympathy, here tenderly taking up those whom he considers the victims of superstition or illusion. In Pastor Sang he has drawn a Christian of the type he considered most truly Christlike, the confident child of God and loving brother of all Creation, filled with the one desire to help all that need it. This man, who is all heart and imagination, lives as a parish priest in the North of Norway, where Nature herself transcends all rational limits, where the heaven throws a light over mountains and sea that drowns all doubt and argument. Sang moves in an atmosphere of ecstasy, in a constant abstraction from common reality. His wife has broken down under the strain of this supermundane existence. The pastor, who works miracles of healing among his flock, had not yet been able to heal her, for she has no longer the whole faith. The children, called home from abroad to join in a circle of prayer around their mother, also doubt. While Sang is in the church, wrestling like Jacob with God, and the avalanche turns aside above the church, a party of clergymen are gathered in the parsonage, discussing from the theological point of view the nature of the Miracle—with an ill-disguised prospective interest in loaves and fishes. Then the patient, who has been asleep for the first time for weeks, rises from her bed and comes walking through the room to meet her husband, whose triumphant Halleluiah from the church has shown that he *knows*; but as he clasps her she dies in his arms, and Sang, with the words, " But this was not . . . or ? . . . or ? . . . ." sinks dead by her side.

[1] Kielland, on a visit to Bjørnson, was entertained by his host at the breakfast-table with heated argument against the feasibility of baptizing three thousand on the same day. " They used the fire-engine, don't you see ! " was the somewhat impatient retort.

It was twelve years before Bjørnson, in *Over Ævne, II*, presented the social aspect of Christianity which to him was revolutionary and anarchic. With calm realism he shows the conflict of party interests in their relentless cruelty. Pastor Sang's son, Elias, is a Christian in his relation to society, that is, an anarchist. To him it is a crime to think of himself so long as the present brutally unjust social order reigns. He sacrifices his means to alleviate the sufferings of the working people and, finally, his life in blowing up a conference of industrial magnates. His sister Rachel, brave, wise, and noble, remains to heal the wounds and uproot the mutual bitterness and distrust.

Bjørnson as a painter of life, and as himself an artist of life, never found fuller expression than in the novel, *Paa Guds Veje* (On God's Ways, 1889). It is the story of Ragni, who had been married when almost a child to a repulsive old man. She is rescued by the young doctor, Edvard Kallem, and becomes his wife. But the couple is exposed to the freezing contempt of a society which can only see such actions as right which lie within the narrow horizon of its conventional morality. Ragni cannot take one step that is not misconstrued : " One cannot expect better in a woman who has divorced her husband and married one of her lodgers." This general attitude chills the very marrow of her soul ; Ragni is actually frozen to death. Doctor Kallem's sister and her husband, his old boy friend, Pastor Ole Tuft, have stood on the side of propriety ; but after Ragni's death, when they find her to have been so pure and good, they are dissolved in shame and remorse. Shortly after, the life of their little child is saved by Dr. Kallem. " The following Sunday a man spoke from the pulpit of the church, out from what he had learnt, namely, about what is first for all of us : ' If I were to ask you who are listening to me, you would all thoughtlessly answer, just because I am asking from this place : *Faith* comes first. No, indeed, it does not. Sit over your child when it lies panting at the utmost verge of life, or see your wife slip after the child out to this utmost verge, beside herself with anguish and watching—then love will teach you that *Life* comes first. . . . God's supreme word to us is that of Life ; our highest worship of him is love of the living. This knowledge, self-evident as it is, *I* needed more than any one. . . . Never again shall words become the highest for me, nor symbols, but the eternal revelation of Life shall. Never again shall I freeze fast in a creed, but let the warmth of Life set free my will. Never again shall I judge men or women by maxims of right from times gone by, if these do not fulfil the demand of Love in our own time.

. . . For I believe in God, the God of Life, and in His incessant revelation in Life."

The moral of this work is summed up in Tuft's final word of understanding, when brother and sister are reconciled : " Wherever good men walk, there are the ways of God."

Amidst these ponderous social and religious novels and dramas comes a merry comedy, almost bordering on the farce, *Geografi og Kjærlighed* (Geography and Love, 1885), an example of the versatility of the author, still bearing his special hall-mark in its hearty defence of the home. It is a piece of self-satire. The professor, preoccupied with his geography, is filling the house with maps and globes, literally leaving no room for his family, who are driven out — the whole naturally ending in reconciliation.

The idea of human confederation is central in Bjørnson, from the league of the family through that of nationality to that of the peoples and of humanity. His charity begins at home, but it does not stop there. The intimate tender feeling for hearth and home inspires much of his poetry :

> " In this I am of the genus snail,
> my house I ev'rywhere with me trail." [1]

It is with him throughout his work ; the *hearth* is truly its focus of light and warmth. *The Newly Married Couple, A Bankruptcy, The New System,* and also his last dramatic works, right up to *When the New Vine Blossoms* (1909), are all placed in, if not actually based on the home. The worst character is given to the Editor in his own words when asked where he is going : " Nowhere—that is to say, home." Bjørnson's home-love only increased with his exodus from Christianity ; it is as though he would say : Our earth is slowly dying through loss of heat ; let us preserve it better by nestling closer together.

Bjørnson, the poet of home and country, had, about the year 1875, acquired the farm Aulestad in Gausdal, one of the open, fertile valleys of Central Norway. Here he lived with his family in his hospitable home, with a large household, guests coming and leaving as they liked. He wanted to make Aulestad a model farm, and took a special interest in his tenants, helping them to become freeholders.

Within the copious work of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, the sheltering growth with which he wanted to clothe the native rock, there sounds a note, distinct and characteristic and yet not easily seized

[1] *Poems and Songs,* translated by A. Hubbell Palmer.

and rendered. With regard to it we find ourselves in the position of the little boy in Arne's song :

THE TONE [1]

" In the woods a laddie went all day long ;
for there he had heard such a wonderful song.

He carved him a flute of the willow-tree,
and tried what the tone within it might be.

The tone it whispered and said : ' I am here.'
But while he was listening it fled from his ear.

Yet oft in his sleep it close to him crept,
and over his brow it lovingly swept.

But, as he would catch it, his sleep took flight.
The tone, it hung fast in the glimmering night.

' O God, my God ! Do let me in !
The tone I have heard all my soul doth win.'

The Lord God said : ' 'Tis a friend divine,
tho' never an hour thou shalt hold it thine.

The other friends, tho' faithful and true,
are nought to that one you in vain pursue.' "

The lyrical *Poems and Songs*, together with *Arnljot Gelline*, were published in 1870. They form a slender volume of about two hundred pages. A number of the poems are descriptive of Nature, but never merely descriptive ; in the nature-poems, whether they be glimpses of woodland dells or comprehensive views of the country, the scene is always regarded as the home of man, and is lined with human feeling. There is also a noticeable tendency towards utilitarian views, the heritage of the peasant.

In 1880 Bjørnson passed along the coast of Romsdalen. The grandeur of the scenery seemed to have even grown since his childhood days. Here human greatness becomes insignificant. The typical opposites of the fjord scenery are reflected in the population. It is costly to live in such a mansion. Nor is it easy to convert the age-long inheritance of passion into steady, constant, beneficent, working energy. Not all who have tried have been successful :

" It *costs* ;—who can do it is thereby a man.
There are those that can."

[1] From the translations of Edmund Gosse, A. Hubbell Palmer, and Edward van Andel.

He knew also that "on this rock-bound coast, where loneliness is increased by the sea storming in and by deadening darkness, there thought is often thrown inwards from work or from play. "With sky, ocean, rocks around: out of a hundred that ponder there comes one who thinks." He had himself grown up among these mountains and felt their weight upon his soul. His poem, *Romsdalen*, is not only a picture of the fjord and its people, but is also a self-portrait.

It is, however, the landscape and atmosphere of the Eastland that appear most often in Bjørnson's poems. He was more at ease there. He has his peculiar way of making the elements of nature serve to express human moods and emotions, as may be indicated by the following rough rendering of *Det første mødes sødme*:

"The charm of the first meeting,
it is like song in woodlands,
it is like song o'er waters
in the last glow of sunset,
like horn-notes from the mountain
those deep resounding seconds,
wherein we are united
with Nature by a wonder."

One feature of these poems that is very noticeable in the original, is their musical quality. They have also, more than any others in our literature, inspired composers, as Richard Nordraak (*Ja, vi elsker; Tonen*), and Halfdan Kjerulf, who has linked with his music so many of our poets. Kjerulf was drawn to the national folk-tunes and followed them in his compositions. Bjørnson wished to collaborate with him, and a series of songs from the last years of the composer's life (he died 1868) sprang from their mutual inspiration: *The Tryst, The Princess, Ingerid's Ditty*, and *Synnøve's Song*. To Arne's song, *Beyond the Lofty Mountains*, there are also compositions by ten other musicians. Where a spirit of courage and buoyancy is needed, Grieg has supplied heartening music, as to the songs in the historical dramas (*e.g.* in *Sigurd the Crusader*).

Another striking feature is the force with which the situation is given in the opening line: *Brede seil over Nordsjø gaar* (Broad sails over the North Sea go); we feel the strain of the bulging sails, and hear the rush of the water dying down when the sails are lowered and weather-beaten warriors look towards Denmark: *Kommer ikke Olav Tryggvason?* (Comes not Olav Tryggvason?). This ballad of a tragic event in the history of Norway was written in Rome in 1861. The poem *On Monte Pincio*, was inspired by Roman scenes. Here the poet's visualizing power is at its highest.

The sunset over the Campagna is painted in words shot through with spiritual significance. When the sun disappears :

> " The mountain is transfigured as a countenance in death."

Into the solemnity of the scene and the sense of twenty centuries of history, tinkle the mandolins and fireworks of modern Italy.

No Norwegian style has a wider range than that of Bjørnson's lyrical poems. He makes effective use of the refrain-like repetition of the folk-song, and occasionally of the alliteration of the ancient scaldic poetry. The ease with which he wields the weightiest words, and his dexterity in difficult rhythms and rhymes, betrays a very conscious and laboriously attained art.

Of English poets Bjørnson may, through his sustained optimism, have most in common with Robert Browning. In a way he unites Browning's delight in the flow of forces from all the visible surface of the universe, with Tennyson's greater sensibility to law, seeing progress in the diffusion of knowledge which must elevate the passions and aspirations of mankind.

A passing touch between Bjørnson and Walt Whitman is interesting to note. After looking into *Leaves of Grass*, Bjørnson had declared that Walt Whitman gave him a joy that no new man had given him for many years, and Whitman recognized in Bjørnson a " first-hand " man : " I was particularly interested in the Norwegian Bjørnson. He sent me his picture once. It is that of a Viking : powerful, inflexible, clean : a face of humanity, purpose : a face of the ideal. Norway has made her best men much bigger than her own size—has made them men of world-dimensions : Ibsen, Bjørnson, and the others." [1]

Bjørnson had felt a breath of, although he did not actually reach, the cosmic enthusiasm of Wergeland and Whitman. The fact that Bjørnson embraced with his sympathy poets like these on one hand, and individualists like Welhaven on the other, better than anything else shows the width of his grasp. A comparison with Victor Hugo naturally suggests itself.[2] Like Victor Hugo, Bjørnson was a union of the epic and lyric poet, like him he increased throughout his long life, until he could reverberate the sensations, the passions, the thoughts of the world—both poets attaining their highest as choral lyrists. More especially in his later years the Norwegian was drawn towards his French brother bard. All Hugo's faults seemed simply to be blown away by the

[1] Horace Traubel : *With Walt Whitman in Camden.*

[2] In an article in the *Athenæum* (30th April 1910) after Bjørnson's death, Mr. William Archer declared that European literature had sustained no such loss since the death of Victor Hugo.

immense vitality of the man. Bjørnson translated parts of *La Légende des siècles* and read them aloud in public, contributing not a little to the inflow of force from French literature into Norway. There is a deep resemblance in their view of the mission of the poet. To Victor Hugo he is the torch-bearer leading the procession of the people. "To stimulate, drive, awaken, and inspire, this is the function which all the great writers fulfil. To remain faithful to all the laws of art, while combining them with the law of progress, such is the problem." To Bjørnson the poet is like "the prophets of old, standing forth in times of need, when new life is being born. Then his faith projects the ideal visibly before the people. He liberates in them the fountains of spring, they surge in his song and give it force." Bjørnson belongs to the poets of Democracy, these modern tribunes of the people, whose task it is to work in the immediate service of their times so that each word expresses some mute want. When asked once upon what occasion he had felt most fully the joy of being a poet, he replied: "That was when a party of Conservatives after a political meeting came to my house and smashed all the windows. For when they had done, and were starting home again, they felt they must sing something, so they broke out with '*Ja, vi elsker*' . . . they could not help it."

Quite a considerable proportion of Bjørnson's poems are occasional verses; he was a master at releasing and giving form to some collective mood, at a wedding or a funeral or on Constitution Day, or in striking poetry from some episode of everyday life. Often, too, in times of personal depression, he could throw out some little song, bristling with good cheer, a kedge, as it were, to haul his barge along with. *Lyset* (Light), Bjørnson's University Cantata of 1895, is a great vision of human progress through the ages, swaying in alternate steps of law and freedom, helped upwards and on by the ideal of the largest, sanest unfolding of life, in faithfulness to the revealing light.

Bjørnson's very last poem, written within a year of his death, was a cantata for the centenary of the Society for *Norges Vel* (the Welfare of Norway), in 1909. It is a marvellous description of a countryside which is parched and panting for the first drop of rain in spring. Everything living is stretched in supplication, from the wayside straw to the goat on the hill-top bleating towards the heavens. . . .

"Then at last came the rain. Not with thunder and great commotion as if bent on a work of destruction — just a faint tinkling and humming at first, inviting to dance. But before one knew what was happening, more drops came on, there was singing and dancing. Hopeless to count the gay whirling couples,

down all the hillside and over the forest: the spirits were high and the hall was roomy.

"Wherever these singing dancers appeared, there colours were lit, what was bent raised its head. Fragrance waved after the dancing array, song flew towards Heaven from dance-trodden Earth.

"None they forget in their galloping joy, they hear the complaint of the feeblest voice, the flimsiest straw they save in its need, go into the innermost leaf nooks, and down where the tiniest rootlet fingers thirsty and pale to their earth-lump are clinging."

With this song the seventy-seven-year-old youthful poet greets the very materialistic activity of the Welfare Society, making music for "a Sunday well-earned after its hundred-year week." The poem is itself as fresh as a summer shower and raises the same exhalation of joy and gratitude where it falls. It is typical of the man who to the last could "melt the ice twelve fathoms round him."

It could not be otherwise than that his exuberant sympathy for all things living and his everlasting "being in truth" must often cause friction and ill-feeling in individualists who did not want him to mind their business. Many people were more alive to the nowise reduced picture he had of himself than to the real greatness which inspired his confidence and self-consciousness. In the politically breezy times of the 'eighties and 'nineties he was generally represented as the big **B.B.,** and those who happened to grow up among the Conservatives of those times would hardly know him otherwise than from caricature in text and illustration. But a kindred spirit has said—and the words are not inappropriate: "The soul has sympathy as measureless as its pride, and the one balances the other, and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other."

Viewing Bjørnson's work as a whole, we find that his art, like that of Victor Hugo, was eminently oratorical and theatrical. Speech and action were his most efficient means for teaching that art of arts, the art of life. The Swede Scholander describes him at a meeting in 1872: "There was about him such plasticity, such wealth and withheld strength, such glow and colour, that I every moment expected him to step down into the hall with the solid candelabrum in his hand."

We will leave Bjørnson with the impression of a word spoken to our own times on his reception of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1903: "We must get a sure feeling that life has a beneficent surplus, that after the worst horrors and the blackest destructions Earth will again be watered from the eternal sources."

What Bjørnson means to Norway may be suggested by a certain tendency in his countrymen to see the outline of his head and face in features of the landscape. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson—we all acknowledge—emerges from our land as its fullest human-voiced expression, grasping what is gentlest and what is strongest there, and raising it in a form in which Norwegians recognize something like their image of the Ideal.

CHAPTER XII

HENRIK IBSEN, THE DRAMATIST

MR. WILLIAM ARCHER, in the spring of 1918, gave a lecture in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at University College, London, on *The True Greatness of Ibsen.* Not as a philosopher nor as a prophet, but as a dramatic *poet* was Ibsen pre-eminent as " the composer of dramatic melodies, the man of intense imagination, of deep insight into the human soul, but above all endowed with the specific faculty of casting his ideas in the intensely concentrated and therefore intensely *moving* dramatic form." Waiving all question of message or gospel, Mr. Archer spoke of a play of Ibsen as " a permanent enlargement of our spiritual experience."

Most mortals cannot sit and suffer permanent enlargement unmoved. To his countrymen the reflection of modern life which Ibsen in his main work held up was startling in its caustic, almost corrosive, truthfulness. Even more than he satisfies æsthetically he disturbs ethically, and that brings us near to one function of the prophet. At least we can never forget the seer in the poet—the seer who through intensity of vision and poetic formative power made others see into the mental and moral processes underlying the relations of human beings, into the stuff that waking life is made of.

During the first twelve or fifteen years of his literary career, roughly from his twenty-second to his thirty-fifth year, Ibsen as a stage manager, first in Bergen and afterwards in Kristiania, was serving his apprenticeship. In his writings as well as in his stage-work his choice and treatment of subject was dictated by the romantic taste of the time. An intermediate period from his thirty-fifth to his fortieth year sees the production of his last and greatest national historical drama, *The Pretenders*, as well as an early herald of his modern problem plays, *Love's Comedy*, his central poetic dramas of *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, and lastly, the greater part of the philosophical double drama, *Emperor and Galilean.* The third period, that of his modern drama, ranges roughly from his fortieth to his seventieth year. During the first half of this last

period, Ibsen is mainly occupied in writing very bitter and very clear social plays, from *The League of Youth* and *The Pillars of Society* to *An Enemy of the People*, and creates great sensation in Scandinavia ; during the latter half he is more calmly, and with ever deepening art and vision, turning his attention to the individual: from *The Wild Duck* to *When We Dead Awaken*. From the first to the last, Ibsen represents the revolt of the individual against the hardening and hindering forms of custom and convention, against the spell of gregariousness.

Ibsen's pale, lean, intense figure is from the first seen in contrast to the broad, ruddy, buoyant Bjørnson, Fortune's favourite. The sense of contrast to the genial sociability of Bjørnson no doubt helped to accentuate the development of Ibsen's individualistic tendencies. Bjørnson early saw that Ibsen's production was more closely related to science than his own, and that Ibsen had greater powers for abstract thinking. As to Ibsen's power of casting his materials into poetic form, Bjørnson remained long in doubt. When *Brand* appeared, he wrote to the author : " This is all right. The ground is prepared. Now for the *poem* ! " But after the appearance of *Peer Gynt*, Bjørnson wrote a warmly enthusiastic letter. He did not remember any book for which he had so much wanted to thank the author personally. The fidelity of the picture conquered his feeling as well as his intellect. " Yes," he wrote, " *Peer Gynt* is excellent, Ibsen ; only a Norwegian can see *how* good it is ! " However, as we have before seen, the two men were too different and too strongly pronounced personalities, and too big to be both comfortably accommodated in the narrow homeland. They were for a long time estranged from one another, and even after reconciliation met only occasionally.

After the poetical drama of his youth and middle age, Ibsen passed on to what he considered " the incomparably more difficult art of writing poetry in straight and true everyday speech." One of his most outstanding characteristics as a playwright is his faculty of concentrating significance in simple, natural features of everyday life, of planting tongues in every little movement. His dramatic perspective is strong and still consistent, as if over-stereoscopically seen from eyes very wide apart. From a certain time in his life, Ibsen (as he says in the poem *On the Fells*) had learnt to look at things with his hand hollowed over his eye for the benefit of the perspective.

One open secret of Ibsen's success, which also accounts for much of the adverse criticism he met with, lies in the strength with which he saw what he could best do, and in the persistence with which he attended to it. Wherever he was, he was at his work. If he was

unsocial, anti-social, anarchic, it was because he had the individualist's faith that each man will best help other men by making the most of his own. "Each bird must sing with its own beak—or kill something with it." But his anarchism was not of the physical violence kind; it simply aimed at rousing in revolt the human spirit against its own golden rules and mind-forged manacles. So it was united in seeming incongruence with the most regular and respectable habits and loyalty to the laws and regulations in the petty German States where he lived, always showing great deference to royalty of every dimension.

In his exterior appearance a change took place about his fortieth year, the time when he was beginning to meet with success, and the time when he exchanged Italy for the German cities—"wine," as he says, "for beer and sausages." His handwriting became extremely neat and regular, the shabby clothing and the great slouch hat which had gained him the nickname of "*il cappelone*" was exchanged for the long, tight-buttoned frock-coat, rounded with the shining cylinder. From having been rough and unapproachable before, he now became trim and unapproachable.

Three things Ibsen did not care for: children, flowers, and music. Nor had he apparently any sense of homelike comfort. The idea of home was at an early period extinguished in him. There was hard metal in the character of the man, and it might often appear as cruelty; but this was a necessary quality for the calm surgeon of moral deformity and disease. "Other reformers," says Mr. Gosse, "are angry and benevolent by turns. Ibsen is uniformly and impartially *stern*." If death plays the part it does in his work, it is largely to combat the general notion that physical death is the greatest of all evils, that life must above all be saved. Many of his personages, like Peer Gynt, Solness, Borkman, are really dead long before their end.

Ibsen followed Mephistopheles' advice to Faust to grasp into the midst of human life, and when what he held up was not all health and beauty the blame was laid on him. It is a desirable thing that a man should be able to unite the eye of the scientist with the vision of the poet, to look analytically and see synthetically. Such a rare man, if he has the gift of expression, has been called an *answerer*. It is not a mere play on words to say that Ibsen reverses the order: he looks with the eye of the poet and sees through his analytic intellect, like a man of science, and turns out not affirmations but *questions*. His calling was "to ask, and not to answer." He is thoroughly Norse in his union of mysticism and rationalism. That Henrik Ibsen is regarded in so many different ways—as the psychologist, the symbolist, the realist, and

the mystic—indicates the manifoldness of his nature and appeal. The hundreds of disputing critics save us from forgetting that Ibsen is *difficult*, if only from the deep significance of his spare and simple dramatic means. Fortunately, if he is hidden from the wise and learned, he reveals himself to the open and watching mind in theatrical presentation. Then the compressed significance helps to suggest that depth and solidity under the surface that causes one to feel that these are not mere pictures but something of life itself. We will now go on to a brief review of the dramatist's life and works.

During the commercially flourishing times of the latter part of the 18th century there was a constant immigration of Danes, Germans, Dutch, and other foreigners into the Norwegian coast towns which had sprung up, generally at the mouth of a river which drained the wooded interior, and were important for the timber trade — such as Fredriksstad, Fredrikshald, Drammen, Laurvig, and Skien. This new element entered gradually into the indigenous population, and at the beginning of the 19th century it constituted an important national factor, supplying in the year 1814 a considerable part of the Constituent Assembly at Eidsvoll.

In the 'twenties and 'thirties of the last century there lived in Skien a merchant, Knud Henriksen Ibsen, who married a young woman of German family, settled there—Maria Cornelia Altenburg. Their eldest son was born 20th March 1828, and was named Henrik Johan (after his two grandfathers). The father was a merry soul, feared for his witty tongue—the mother a grave, silent, solitary being. Their house was a very hospitable one, quite a centre of the little society of the town. In Henrik's eighth year his father's business failed, and the sociable family, used to all comforts, were suddenly stripped by bankruptcy of all they owned, excepting a small farm on the outskirts of the town; there they lived in very retired fashion. This change left a lasting impression on the child's mind, especially the sudden disappearance of all the former guests and friends. He was a quiet boy and kept mostly by himself in a spare room of the house with his books and drawings and cut-out paper figures on footpieces of wood. In his fifteenth year he was confirmed, and—as there could be no question of cultivating his budding artistic faculties—he was sent in the autumn of 1843 to the small shipping place Grimstad to earn his living as an apothecary's apprentice. He hardly ever saw his native town again, nor his family. When some six years afterwards he left Grimstad, it was for the capital, and to follow what he then began to feel as his vocation. The separation from his home seems to have been partly due to the lack of natural sympathy, to his parents'

strict orthodoxy, and to the necessity of being absolutely independent with his work; he felt that kinsman may be kin's foe. To his favourite sister Hedvig he confided at that time that he intended to reach the "highest stage that could be attained, in greatness and clearness of soul—and then die."

In 1848 the commotion from the great European revolution reached Grimstad, as it did Molde, where young Bjørnson was making himself impossible at school by his boisterous acceptance of the spirit of the time. Ibsen's as well as Bjørnson's first literary efforts are connected with his enthusiastic response to the ideas of 1848. In his study of Sallust and Cicero he had been captivated by the figure of Catiline; he had come to the conclusion that the Roman conspirator had been unjustly treated by history, and was resolved to effect his rehabilitation. During hours in the night and stolen moments in the laboratory he worked out his first dramatic attempt, *Catilina*. This Catiline of 1848 burns to re-establish the liberty of the citizens, the old Roman civic spirit. He is an enemy of all unjust power, a friend of the weak and oppressed. The fate of Ibsen's first work was that after forty-five copies had been distributed or sold, the remaining two hundred and five were handed over to a grocer as packing paper, after which Ibsen and the student friend who had paid for the publishing and invited him to share his room, for a few days could afford a dinner. The Kristiania republic of letters had sided with Cicero. In the meanwhile Ibsen was, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, working for his *Examen Artium* at Heltberg's student-factory in company with Vinje and Bjørnson. In the autumn of 1851 Ibsen had the good fortune to get acquainted through Vinje with Ole Bull, who came to Kristiania to arouse interest in his scheme for a national stage in Bergen. The consequence was that Ibsen, before the end of the year, found himself in Bergen with the task of assisting the new theatre as instructor and dramatic author.

In this capacity Ibsen had the opportunity to travel and study the art of the stage, which he did in Copenhagen and Dresden. He further studied *on the stage* in working up the plays of Shakespeare, Holberg, Oehlenschläger, J. L. Heiberg, and especially Eugène Scribe. Scribe was Ibsen's and Bjørnson's first teacher of technique, whom they both outgrew.

In the period of National Romanticism Ibsen fell avidly over Landstad's collection of Norse Ballads (1852–53). But before he passed on to illustrate in practice and theory his belief that the popular ballad was the future material of the drama, he wrote an historical play, *Fru Inger til Østraat*, which with its general gloom symbolized the darkest period in the history of Norway, the early

16th century, when national life was at its lowest ebb. Ibsen himself set it highest among the productions of the Bergen period; but the blend of German romanticism and French intrigue, the personages all wilfully or unwilfully mystifying one another, sorely tries the reader's patience. *Dame Inger*—the only *man* in Norway at this epoch—is, like the author, hampered by doubt as to her vocation to rouse and raise her country: "Woe is each one who has been charged with a great mission!"

The play in which Ibsen pictured his joy in the folk-song, *The Feast at Solhaug*, when performed, 2nd January 1856, under the author's direction, was a great success. In the preface to the second edition (1883) Ibsen wrote: "The Bergen lyrism that night soared high in the crowded theatre." We see from this interesting preface that Landstad's *Folkeviser* when they came interrupted Ibsen's first studies in the *Sagas*. And as his mood was at the time more in tune with the musical element of the ballads than with the hard, austere wood-carving of the Saga, the result was that the gay and courtly singing figures of the *Feast at Solhaug* stepped in before the *Warriors at Helgeland*, men and women. With the latter, the flowing breadth of this romantic expansion gave place to the energetic contraction and terseness of style which tallies with the spirit of the North.

After his six years' service in Bergen, Ibsen returned to Kristiania, little richer than when he came either in money or in honour, but much richer in one not unimportant way: he had made the acquaintance of SUSANNE THORESEN, the daughter of a Bergen pastor, and after a year he came back to take her with him as his wife. To her, long afterwards, he wrote his quiet lines, *Thanks*:

. . . . . .

"Hers is the fleeting figures' procession,
that wave their flags in my song,
Hers 'twas to kindle the glow in my vision
so none knew who helped me along."

Six further hard years lay before Ibsen in Kristiania, a cold town in more ways than one, where he lived, it has been remarked, "in an overcoat, on debt." The drama which he first produced had been worked out in Bergen partly before and partly after *Dame Inger* and the *Feast at Solhaug*. In the Icelandic Sagas he found the material to suit him: "From my converse with all these simple, direct, complete men and women there rose in my mind the first sketch of *Hærmændene paa Helgeland*."

The principal figure, the Valkyrie woman, Hjørdis, who, full-armed and with flowing hair, appears before her lover, Sigurd,

upbraids him for his misplaced magnanimity in giving her up to his friend Gunnar: "All good gifts may a man give his faithful friend—all save the woman he loves; for if he do that he rends the secret web of the fate-goddess, and two lives are wasted." She pierces Sigurd with her arrow and throws herself over the edge of the cliff into the sea below, and is in the final scene of storm and darkness discovered by her little boy astride a black horse at the head of the horde of Valkyries, rushing through the sky in the wild *Aasgaardsreien.*

With the *Warriors* the old saga style, with its clear simplicity and forceful brevity, was resuscitated in the Norwegian of modern times. "My son," says old Ørnulf from the Fjords, "hold no useless discourse. Let all that you speak be trenchant like the sword's edge." The language of the *Warriors* often has the lapidary conciseness and ring of a proverb, *e.g.*: "For frænders færd maa frænder lide" (For kinsmen's acts must kinsmen smart). It is *written* in the original sense of the word, graven like runes on the *bauta* stone.

Ibsen felt at home both as a man and as an artist with the essentially tragic outlook of the early Norsemen. To them the world was one tragedy, and the story of the human race and the loves of high-minded men and women was tragedy within tragedy. Hjørdis is herself the supremely tragic figure, with great gifts that had turned to evil in uncongenial circumstances. "Evil days breed evil thoughts." She is a true daughter of Ibsen, the armed leader of a procession of warrior women in Ibsen's theatre, ending with Irene in *When We Dead Awaken*; for it was not only in his youthful plays that Henrik Ibsen treated, as he says, "the contrast between aspiration and power, between will and possibility, at once the tragedy and comedy of mankind and of the individual."

The *Warriors* was eventually performed at the "Norwegian Theatre."[1] However, Ibsen, the manager, under the influence of general lack of appreciation and of poverty, was growing less careful in the execution of his duties. In 1862 the theatre was bankrupt, and Ibsen had to accept a subordinate situation at the Christiania Theater. At this low-water ebb of the stage-manager's fortunes appeared a bitter play, *Love's Comedy* (1862). It has been said about it that one is sure of nothing in the play except of its sarcasm. It treats the incongruencies of fancy with reality, showing how our ideals turn sour in the atmosphere of daily life. The author had started to write it in prose; but partly in unconscious protest against the more than usually prosaic time, and also because Ibsen

[1] Cf. p. 167.

when sharply pricked had to dance, as he says, on his metric feet, he adopted rhymed verse to give vent to the oppression he felt. The shaft is aimed particularly at the social feature of marriage engagements, the first catastrophe to love. Education has supplied the young victims with ideals that serve as salt when that soul-killing season comes and all the house is busy. It would be ridiculous to expect that love should survive this shock. We are told a romantic love-story of

> "How she to him and he to her was true.
> They dreamt together of a hut, and how
> there was a sheep that could support the two
> (at most it may have been a little cow).
> A brook, a cottage, and each other's heart
> until the time that Death should them depart."

We presently learn that the sheep (or cow) is symbolical, for

> "He by his light guitar did pledge his troth;
> she by piano-lessons fed them both."

The two idealists of the play, Falk and Svanhild, who stand together for a moment against the soulless vulgarity of their surroundings, are parted when the good-natured, wealthy merchant Guldstad comes up and demonstrates that something more substantial is needed as a substratum for the long, high road of wedded life—and Falk is left singing that

> "Although I have sailed my vessel aground,
> still it was fine to be sailing."

Love's Comedy was the first of Ibsen's works to create a sensation, and to the author it was not a pleasant one. All the various offended representatives of society cried out that it was unpoetic and immoral.

In the following year prospects grew brighter. Ibsen was on his way back from a congress of student singers in Bergen, where he had met Bjørnson, when he received the news that the Storting had at last granted him too a travelling scholarship. In less than two months *Kongsemnerne* (*The Pretenders*, 1863) was written and produced with decided success at Christiania Theater. The drama treats of the last part of the civil wars in the 13th century. In the historical treatment Ibsen was fairly free; he rearranges and welds together detail, so as to bring out into so much stronger relief the main events and the main characters of this dramatic time. This makes the *Pretenders* in the first place a psychological drama, of a depth and force unknown so far in our literature. It is a study of the clash of human characters—between youthful confidence on one side and frantic ambition on the other, between faith in a mission and doubt even of one's own doubt. A third

element is also present, that of impotent jealousy expending its last breath to keep the struggle going.

Facing young Haakon, supremely confident in his royal calling, stands Jarl Skule Baardsson, brother of the late regent. He is a gifted man, but lacks the faith which would give him the power of concentrating his faculties on a single aim. Between them stands the mitred, ghostly figure of Bishop Nicholas, who serves his own ambition by drawing them into evenly balanced and lifelong contest, until he sinks into the earth to live on as the very spirit of contention and uncertainty in Norway. Bishop Nicholas had been the secret founder and stirrer-up of political factions all his life. (The king's enemies, *Baglerne*, were named from his *baculum*.) He looks into the future in his way : " Haakon Haakonsson is king and the Jarl has the King's seal . . . it will work, it will work, it will work." That is the *perpetuum mobile* which he leaves behind to secure his immortality.

Jarl Skule is the most interesting personage of the drama (as he also was in A. Munch's contemporary play, which was ousted by Ibsen's). King Haakon has placed him next to himself and married his daughter. Haakon dazzles him with his *kongstanke*, his kingly idea, of uniting the parties and making Norway one people, whereas Skule would have supported his power by keeping dissension alive. Skule tries to steal Haakon's kingly idea, but cannot really make the unity-thought his own, or gain confidence in himself. He goes on from disaster to disaster, from sedition to death, and Haakon, stepping over his fallen foe, gives this judgment : " Skule Baardsson was God's stepchild on earth."

Remembering the circumstances of Ibsen's early years of struggle in Norway, one cannot but see in the personage of Haakon a good deal of young Bjørnson, a man who had faith in himself and communicated assurance to others. For him everything succeeded ; he had found his task, and was acknowledged as our leading poet, while Ibsen was still feeling his way in a slower development, and had hardly yet been acknowledged as a poet at all.

At this point events happened in the history of Europe which took hold of Ibsen and determined the future line of his progress more than any other external factor, opening his eyes to the real facts about faith and fidelity between nations, and leading him into voluntary exile. It has been mentioned in a former chapter how the Dano-German War of 1864 came as a tremendous fiasco for the enthusiastic Scandinavianism of the preceding years. Ibsen's disappointment at the failure of his countrymen to stand by their Danish brethren made him turn his back on his country and repair to Rome.

Of the spell of the Eternal City on him he wrote: "All is immense here, with an indescribable peace over it all. No politics, no commercial spirit, no military to give its one-sided stamp to the population; it cannot *do* much, and it does not *know* much —but it is indescribably beautiful and whole and true and silent."

But under these impressions Ibsen's feelings for his countrymen were increased and heightened, to break out so much the stronger in his subsequent work. During the summer of 1865, in Aricia, he was labouring with an epic poem. But one day on a visit to Rome, in St. Peter's Church, suddenly rose before him a strong and clear form for what he had got to say. It was at that moment that the epic *Koll* ceded to the dramatic *Brand*. "Now," he wrote to Bjørnson (12 Sept. '65), "I have thrown overboard that which I have for a year been torturing myself with, without arriving at anything. In the middle of July I began on something which has advanced for me as nothing has ever done before. It is *new* in the sense that I then began to write; but the materials and the mood have weighed on me like a nightmare since the terrible events in the North made me look into myself and consider my own part in them." Thinking back of the time in which he wrote the drama, he speaks of the crusader's joy that then filled him. He was working himself out of that mainly æsthetic conception of poetry which he had expressed in *On the Fells*, when he looked down from the heights on the men who grope in the valley, on his mother's burning cottage, and the bridal procession carrying his bride away as another man's wife, and "held over his eyes his hollowed hand to obtain a better perspective." That kind of æstheticism now appeared to him to be as great a curse to poetry as theology was to religion.

The work in which Ibsen was then relieving his feelings was not without obligations to other thinkers. One philosopher who had great influence in the North in the middle of the 19th century was the Dane, Søren Kierkegaard. Already in *Love's Comedy* we see an analogy to Kierkegaard's idea that each man becomes a genius, a hero, a poet, or a saint through the girl he did *not* get, and it reappears in Brand's "Only the lost is owned for ever." Kierkegaard's categorical demand for unity of faith and life was discussed everywhere.[1] In *Brand* may also be seen a development of Wergeland's theme:

> "Be thyself and be it whole—
> that is victory, my soul!"

[1] No lesser influence was that of the revival, inaugurated by Pastor Lammers, in Ibsen's native town, Skien.

The fiery young priest Brand, who is on his way to the narrow valley of his childhood home, expresses the author's view of his people: "A fraction in great, and a fraction in small; but the worst of it is that each separate part of the fraction destroys all the rest of it." His motto is:

> "If all you give, but life except,
> you might as well the whole have kept."

His demand on himself and others for thoroughness in life and religion is heightened by the lack of response to it in his flock, and he develops into a monstrous combination of sacrificial priest and victim. He greets his old mother when seeing her again, after years, with the words:

> "Good-day, good-bye, I've little time."

And when she sends for him from her dying bed he refuses to administer the sacrament to her because she will not give away *all* her property. He wears away the life of his wife Agnes (the young girl who has left her artist lover for him) in the dark, cold gorge where he has fixed their home. Their little child could not live in this sunless place.

A supreme scene is Christmas Eve at the Vicarage. Brand is in his study pondering on the God of Law who stands above, demanding compensation from generation to generation. The thought of prayer occurs to him. Has he ever prayed? Perhaps in the unearthly music that came to him when his boy was dead. Agnes comes in with a Christmas candle and places it in the window, and wipes the dim glass so that a little of the Christmas glow may fall on the snow-covered grave in the churchyard opposite. But Brand will not grant her this idolatrous grave- and memory-worship; she must weed it out, roots and rootlets—and *willingly*, otherwise it is of no use.

> "AGNES (*shrinks back*): Thy Lord's path is steep and narrow!
> BRAND: The will can walk that path alone.
> AGNES: But Mercy's——?
> BRAND (*interrupts her*): A sacrificial stone.
> AGNES: Before me like a chasm lies
> that word whose deepest sense, unheard
> till now I never plumbed.
> BRAND: What word?
> AGNES: That *he who sees Jehovah dies*!"

When Brand goes back to his Christmas sermon, Agnes relapses into her reveries, seems to hear her child knocking at the window,

and sends him back to heaven; for father must be obeyed. She is taking out the child's clothes, which she has kept, and Brand, who has come in unseen, is praying silently to be spared the task of intervening, when a gipsy-woman suddenly rushes in and demands the clothes for her half-naked baby. Agnes instinctively denies her: it were sacrilege to the dead one! However, she has at last, piece by piece, given them away, *all*—even the little cap which she has kept on her breast—and *willingly* given. Full of joy she exclaims: "*Brand, I am free!*" But she reminds him that now *he* stands before the same choice of all or naught, for: "Whoever sees Jehovah dies."

Following with hard consistency his ideal, and turning it into an idol of stone, Brand sacrifices to the God of Law those that are dearest to him. His congregation, for a moment inspired to follow him on a mad crusade over the country, soon turn on their prophet, who has no visible reward to offer, and drive him with stones into the mountain wilds up towards the ice-church of the glacier. As the avalanche thunders down upon him, he asks in agony whether man's will can help no whit towards salvation; and a voice through the masses that bury him, answers: "He is the God of Love."

The figure of Brand is an almost caricatured contrast to what Ibsen then saw in his countrymen, but we must not, with Mr. Bernard Shaw,[1] ignore the author's own words: "Brand is myself in my best moments." Brand, like Ibsen, felt all the pain which he inflicted, and lashed himself together with his people, secretly biting the tongue with which he punished. Brand is not in the first instance either an example or a warning; he acts as his people's bad conscience, a hero produced by its own paltry satisfaction with half-measures. The race itself grows for its purposes specialized organs, and it often seeks to rid itself of them, as of pain. The mad girl Gerd applies her "*Ecce Homo!*" not altogether wildly to the bruised and bleeding Brand.

Up to the appearance of this work Ibsen had had no great success, and as to *Brand*, his new Copenhagen publisher, Hegel, the head of the Gyldendal firm, kept him in suspense for several months. He evidently did not think it a suitable theme for Christmas. But when it did appear, in March 1866, it proved one of the most sensational events in the literary history of Scandinavia. *Brand* was discussed by everybody, and edition followed upon edition. The Storting found that it could no longer look on "a highly gifted and productive spirit succumbing in the struggle for mere existence," and Ibsen was almost unanimously granted an annual sum,

[1] *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, which is increasingly interesting as it comes to the dramatist's later work.

the so-called "poet's stipend," which Bjørnson, his always successful fellow-poet, was already receiving.

In Italy we should expect Ibsen to have been drawn to the past, and he was for one subject, that of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, the last representative of ancient paganism. But he soon left it, to be worked out several years later as *Emperor and Galilean.* The unexampled notice and criticism which *Brand* evoked kept his thoughts occupied with the North. He would give his compatriots some more of his mind. But naturally it came in a different form, after his recognition by public and parliament. If Ibsen had first contracted himself into the almost inhuman ice-church ideal of Brand, he let himself go in his following work in a way that made people wonder where the preacher had gone to. Brand was an adamantine being of the will, hard to brittleness—and broken in the end. The hero of the following play, if hero he can be called—*Peer Gynt*—is a well-nigh will-less being, hollow and yielding. "*Gynt,*" said Otto Weininger, "the very name is like an india-rubber ball, that bounces off the ground." Fortunately, this elastic bounding quality is characteristic of the play itself in a better sense. The novelist, Jonas Lie, who could not bear *Brand,* compared *Peer Gynt* to a wild, national *Halling* leap and kick that "took the rafter," as we say. It certainly has all the buoyant humour of the Norse folk-tales and fairy-tales in it, and it was written, we remember, at the turn of the tide in Ibsen's fortunes, under Italian skies at Ischia, Sorrento, and at Rome ; some one has added, in a winter when there were no ladies in the Scandinavian colony. It certainly stands by itself as the author's most genially sunny, open-air production. Ibsen was a townsman through and through, and one wonders at the fidelity with which he has called forth the landscape, the life of the peasants, the whole atmosphere. Partly, his poetic genius has here transformed material from a folk-loristic excursion to the inner Westland fjords ; more is due to information from his friend, the critic, Paul Botten-Hansen, who was a peasant from the Gudbrandsdal ; but most to that national treasure, one might almost say treasury, Asbjörnsen's fairy-tales, with their masterly rural and rustic setting.

It was in one of these tales that Ibsen found the man Peer Gynt, who had been a great hunter up in the region of the Rondane mountains, a man who really performed some exploits and credited himself with more, and who enjoyed a special reputation for chasing the subterranean trolls and huldre-folk from the dairy-farms, the *seters.* Ibsen selects Peer Gynt as the typical Norwegian, turns him out into the world, and shows us stages of his life from youth to old age. It is as though the author, in order to make his scape-

goat able to carry the many sins and weaknesses of the people—all the gross materialism, indolence, and moral cowardice—has made his Peer Gynt a sturdy young fellow with unquenchable spirits, an almost amiable rogue, particularly with a saving poetic sense. Besides, he makes this representative of the Norwegian nation a highly gifted man. He is not the servant who was entrusted with one talent, and went and buried that, but one who got five.

It was a feature of the actual Peer Gynt, who lived on in the popular legend, that he used to tell that he had performed all the daring hunter's deeds that he heard of. So does Ibsen's, but—whatever his actual capacities—he far outsoars his namesake in imagination. He tells the stories till he believes them himself. *He* is the lad that coaxed the devil into the nut, and his not very good friend the smith is the one that scorched his hands in cracking the nut for him. Tales that were *almost* historical truth to the people generally, become personal experience to Peer. One would think that the author is almost envious of the great vogue of the Norse fairy-tales, saying: "That is what the people is nurtured with, and this is what comes out of it. You get dreams for deeds."

The national satirical aspect has here been emphasized, because it is the source of most of the difficulties that meet the foreign reader in this bewilderingly rich play. But there is layer below layer of significance in the drama before us: under the national layer, the larger human layer, and in the hidden caves the miner himself, working his way, as he had to, blow on blow, down towards the fundamental elements of human action. Nor can we overlook the personal bond between the poet and his creation. Peer Gynt bounds off with a life of his own, but wheresoever he strays he points to Henrik Ibsen as his father, and he returns in the end, and is accepted like the prodigal son—a circumstance which has made most critics grumble, with the elder brother in the parable, that the conclusion is very unfair. But we must be careful not to be caught in the company of the "interpreters" who, according to our author, see nothing, or at best have an inkling of something that is not there. Ibsen, though not wholly innocent of idea and intention, insisted on *Peer Gynt* being read as a poem.

The drunken young blackguard of the first three acts is almost redeemed by Peer Gynt, the lyrical poet. He has carried away the bride of another man on her wedding; he has flouted her, and revelled with wild *seter* maids in a mood poignantly descriptive of the play as a whole:

> "Mind all heavy, thoughts all leaping,
> laughing eyes, and inward weeping."

Dizzy and bewildered, his head in a whirl and his limbs aching, he is staring at the snowy peaks of Rondane that lie before him in the sunset:

" Castle on castle is stacking
itself. What a portal! Hey!
Stand! Will you stand! It is backing
farther and farther away.
The weathercock vane is raising
and flapping its wings for flight;
shadows the clefts are hazing,
the mountain is closed for the night."

Visions rise and die away: giants with heron legs on the wooded hillside, rainbow lights and distant chimes, all weld into a red-hot ring round his head:

(*He sinks down.*)

" Ridges along on the buck ride,
stuff and accursed lie!
Climbing the steepest rockside
with the bride, and drunk for a day.
Hunted by hawks and kestrels,
threatened by trolls and—ugh!
revelled with wenches and wastrels,
lies and accursed stuff! . . .

(*He gazes upwards for a long time.*)

Ah! there two eagles are sailing.
To the South go the free wild geese.
And here I am trudging and trailing
in quagmires and slush to my knees!

(*He springs up.*)

I will *forth*! I will strip myself clear in
the whirling winds on the mount.
I will *up*! I will dip myself sheer in
the shining baptismal font!"

Then the darkening mountain changes into his father's house. Through the clatter and din of breaking glass come loud calls for the son of the house; they want to drink his health:

" Peer Gynt, thou art come of great things,
and great thou shalt some time become!"

With this he springs forward, runs his head against a rock, and remains stretched senseless on the ground.

At this stage Peer, in Bernard Shaw's somewhat oracular phrase, tries the supernatural, that is to say, he has very unpleasant dreams about a troll princess and a castle which he would never get out of. He fails to see the difference between the human: " Man, be thyself," and the trollish: " Troll, to thyself be enough."

In his frantic efforts to wake up, he is struggling with the invisible, huge, and viscous monster, the *Bøig*, which tells him to go round and about. Just as he is on the point of being overcome, a vision of the pure young girl Solveig, whom he had met at the wedding, flashes across his mind, and the great *Bøig* shrinks up to nothing with a gasp :

> " He was too strong. There were women behind him."

Solveig actually comes up to the woods to live with the outlaw, and Peer for a moment thinks that his castle is built ; but the Troll Castle rises between him and the young girl :

> " Go in with that troll rabble after me still ?
> Speak, yet be silent, confess yet conceal ?
> It is holy-day evening. For me to keep tryst
> such I now am were sacrilege."

Peer calls to Solveig in the hut that he has something heavy to fetch. No, she can't help him, he must carry it alone. Solveig answers that she will wait for him, and Peer Gynt runs away, blinking the fact that he leaves the burden with her.

On his way out into the world Peer looks in at his mother's house, and finds her dying ; so in return for the stories she told him as a child, to escape from the misery of their ruined home, he sits down at the foot of her bed, and drives her with his good steed Granë (the old cat lying on the chair) over the glittering, rumbling ice to the castle which is east of the sun and west of the moon, where St. Peter greets them with wine and cakes, and " Mother Aase shall enter free ! "

After some twenty-five years, Peer reappears as a well-dressed and wealthy American in the company of four tourists who have come with him in his steam-yacht to the coast of Morocco. These friends, a Frenchman, an Englishman, a German, and a Swede, respond each according to his national peculiarity to Sir Peter Gynt's narrative of his fortunes. He is an altogether self-made man, a Norwegian by birth, but cosmopolitan in spirit. But the main secret of his luck is that he was never married. A man should, before everything, be *himself* ; how can he—as a beast of burden for the weal and woe of others ?

His confessions have a demoralizing effect on his friends, who bribe the crew and set off with his yacht.

Peer Gynt always springs up again after his mishaps. He is not going to let fate get hold of him, would sham dead first, " possuming " as it is called after a small, round, elastic animal. His philosophy is not merely *cynical* or dog-like, but shirking and

easy-going. Somewhere between pessimism and optimism Peer Gynt rolls up in his "*possumism.*"

For a short time Peer plays the prophet with a Bedouin tribe in the desert, and amuses himself with its dusky beauties, which leads him to the conclusion that the times

> "are not worth the sole of my shoe,
> faithless and feeble the minds of the men;
> no spiritual light, no great deed; and then—
> the women are a contemptible crew."

Here the African background opens to give a glimpse of a scene far north, in the woods of Norway. Outside a log-hut, with reindeer horns over the door, a middle-aged woman sits spinning, and sings, and the burden of her song is that autumn and winter may pass and the next summer too; but one day *he* will come back, and *she* will wait, as she promised to do.

Having taken up the study of history to follow the progress of the human race from a safe point of vantage, he finds himself face to face with the great Sphinx, which reminds him of the *Bøig*. Here he falls in with a scholar who is delighted with Peer's theory that the Sphinx is *itself*, and drags him off to Cairo to the house of the "Interpreters." Then his guide confides to him in a whisper that "absolute reason departed this life last night at eleven," and Peer, who finds himself in an asylum—where the director has joined the patients, and locked up the keepers—does not know which party he is joining. They all come to him as the head of the "Interpreters" to have their personal difficulties solved. But he fails to free the applicants from *themselves*, and one after the other commits suicide before his eyes. The last is a foreign minister, who swears that he is a quill-pen (while it is generally held that he is a sand-box), and who proves his point by sharpening himself with a knife, namely, cutting his throat. Peer swoons, and is crowned with a wreath of straw, with cries of "Long live Selfhood's Emperor!"

Time has again passed, and Peer Gynt, after further wanderings, has at last come back to his homeland. It is Whitsun Eve. In a clearing of the forest stands a log-hut. Peer is creeping about among the trees, grubbing up wild onions, and holds one up, chuckling:

"Now I am going to peel you, my Peer—it's no use begging for mercy—so there!" He pulls off layers one by one. "This outer torn one is the man in distress on a sinking boat. Inside is the gold-digger Ego, no juice left if it ever had any. This rough one—fur-hunter from Hudson Bay. This looks like a crown—

thanks, put that away! Here's the historian, short but strong. Behind him comes the prophet along; he stinks, as the Scripture has it, of lies, enough to bring tears to an honest man's eyes. . . . These sickly black streakings—sure I can't tell—might be negro and missionary as well. What an enormous number of leaves! Isn't the kernel soon turning up? Well, I never! Nothing but layers, only smaller and smaller: *Nature is witty.*"

Meanwhile Peer has crept nearer to the hut, he catches sight of it, and gradually remembers: " those reindeer horns, that lock, to keep out pestering goblin thoughts? " Solveig sings from within—and Peer *hears* this time:

> " Now all is ready for Whitsun Eve.
> Dear boy, from far away are you coming to me?
> If what you bring is heavy, then only take your time:
> I shall wait as I promised when we met."

Peer Gynt rises, still and deathly pale:

> " One that has remembered; and one that has forgot,
> One that has thrown away; and one that has kept.
> Anguish! *here* my empire lay! "

He runs away along the foot-path, and from this point the scene becomes wholly subjective and symbolical. Peer Gynt is fey, approaching his end; and with enhanced imagination he encounters the scattered features of his life, which is seen as one great omission. He meets a Button-moulder with his casting-ladle and tool-chest, who is looking for Peer to melt and recast him. Peer wants to know what he has done? Nothing—that is why he will escape torment. Peer Gynt was designed for a brilliant button on the vest of the world, but the loop gave way, so into the waste-box he needs must go to be merged in the mass. Peer revolts against " this casting-ladle business, this surcease of Gynt " ; would rather be placed—for a period—with him with the hoof. The Button-moulder argues that as he has never been *himself* at all, what does it matter to die right out?

In vain Peer seeks for witnesses to his having been himself, or even a sinner. His illusions are all gone. He finds himself expelled from the self-owning nobility. The shooting star that crosses the sky may bring a greeting from brother Peer:

> " To flash, to go out, to be lost in a gulf."

Confronted with annihilation, Peer Gynt realizes that whether a man would save his skin or his soul, he will lose it. What *is* only,

cannot be lost; what is possessed is lost already. The soul stands stripped naked at last.

> "So unspeakably poor must a soul go away,
> back into nought in the weltering grey!
> Thou lovely earth, be not angry with me,
> that I trampled thy grass to no use at all.
> Thou lovely sun, who gavest so free,
> lettest thy rays on a cottage fall,
> where there was none to cheer and warm;
> (the owner they say was never at home).
> Foolish were you, sun and beautiful earth
> to bear and light her who to me gave birth.
> Spirit is sparing and Nature spends;
> a life for a birth is heavy amends.—
> Up on the steepest peak I will climb;
> I will see the sun rise for the one last time!
> On the promised land I will gaze, and stay
> till I sink and bury me deep in the snow.
> They may write on it; 'Nobody here lies low'—
> and afterwards, then—let it go as it may."

The distant psalm from the church-goers is like a stab to the broken man; but just as the Button-moulder comes up at the crossways to demand his saving list of sins, Peer sees a light from a hut and hears the voice of a woman singing. *This* time, Peer Gynt does not go round about, but straight on. Solveig, now old and nearly blind, stands in the doorway dressed for church, with a hymn-book wrapped in a kerchief and a staff in her hand, and Peer throws himself down on the doorstep:

> "PEER: Have you doom for a sinner, speak it forth!
> SOLVEIG: In nought have you sinned, my own only boy.
> All my life have you made into beautiful song.
> Blest—thrice blest our Whitsunmorn meeting!
> PEER: Then I am lost—unless you rede riddles.
> SOLVEIG: Say forth!
> PEER: Where has Peer Gynt been, since we parted? . . .
> Where was I, as myself, the whole man, the true man?
> Where was I with God's seal on my brow?
> SOLVEIG: In my faith, in my hope, in my love.
> PEER: What say you? Peace! Those are only words,
> to the boy in there you yourself are mother.
> SOLVEIG: I am; but who is his father?
> He that forgives at the mother's prayer."

A light spreads over Peer's countenance; he cries out:

> "My mother; my wife; oh, innocent woman,
> hide me, hide me, in there!"

He buries his face in Solveig's lap. There is a long silence. The sun rises. Solveig sings softly:

"Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine! I will cradle thee, I will watch thee!"

The Button-moulder's voice is heard behind the hut:

"We meet at the last cross-road, Peer; then we shall see. I say no more."

But Solveig sings louder in the brightening day.

"Sleep and dream thou, dearest boy!"

In *Peer Gynt* Ibsen had sung out his impression of men and the times with a voice and intonation which he confessed he could only have ventured to use well away from home, among the hills of Italy. The adverse criticism which he now met was not so much due to the satire of the drama as to lack of appreciation of its poetry. People were not prepared for this mixture of the solemn and the cynical. Ibsen was hurt that Bjørnson, who was at this time in Copenhagen, did not help the Danish critics to a better understanding. "My book is poetry," he declared, "and ideas on that subject in Norway shall come round to mine; if it is not it *will be* poetry."[1]

In the spring of 1868 Ibsen left Italy, and was on his way home when he stopped in Dresden. A transition to prose had its attractions, for a change. This became a lasting change and a long stay. On Dresden ground rose his first thoroughly prosaic play, *The League of Youth* (1869). In this amusing comedy the prose dialogue of the subsequent Norwegian drama is formed. It marks a great advance in stage technique, as the persons are fully characterized by their conversation, without the help of monologues or asides. The play centres round a windbag of a journalist and politician, an upstart lawyer, who wants to get on by any and every means and to be borne along by the people—who puffs himself up more and more, and is pricked in the end.

People would not believe the author's declaration that it was all harmless fun, but took it, not altogether unnaturally, as a skit upon Bjørnson, and, naturally enough, as an impertinence to the young Liberal party. During the hubbub Ibsen himself was, by invitation from the Khedive, attending the opening of the Suez Canal, and reminded only by the files of what was going on at home.

[1] *Peer Gynt* was prepared for the stage and acted for the first time in August 1876. In London it was produced in the spring of 1922, at the "Old Vic," and proved a remarkable success.

It was some time before he again treated everyday subjects. That was when Bjørnson's *En Fallit* had roused him to emulation, and the two writers for a few years kept up a useful rivalry, until they departed on their different ways. In the meanwhile a subject which, as mentioned, had presented itself to Ibsen's mind during his first year in Italy, received a stimulus from the so-called *Kulturkampf* in Germany, in which Bismarck and the State had to yield to Roman Catholicism, the Church.

Emperor and Galilean, as the title suggests, treats the struggle between Christianity and the traditions of ancient Rome and Greece, traditions which, during the first three centuries of our era, had been undermined by the teeming religious systems of the East, until one of them finally broke into the Roman Imperium itself and formed with it an *Ecclesia*, a Church. Julian, the son of a brother of Constantine the Great, wavers between a humane Paganism and the ascetic Christianity which he has learnt in his youth in Cappadocia. "The Galilean's message is not teaching, it is magic; who has once been under his influence will never be free again." What does half free the idealistically-minded youth is the spectacle of the ugly moral conditions existing under the cloak of Christianity. But the Paganism which the Emperor Julian tries to resuscitate proves—also to himself—lifeless, and his endeavours only serve to brace the Christian movement and purify it. It has the future: "*Vicisti, Galilæe!* Thou hast conquered, Galilean!" as the dying Emperor admits. The mystic's "third kingdom" is that for whose coming Ibsen himself was praying; the historical subject had a closer connection with the questions of the time than might at first be supposed.

Instead of trying to extricate Ibsen's philosophy from under these heavy blocks of not wholly mastered learning, we may look for it in his speech at Stockholm in September 1887. At that time, when he was working at *The Lady from the Sea*, Ibsen was much occupied with the ideas of evolution. Something like a gradual reunion of body and spirit lies behind Ibsen's belief in a progressive ideal, one in which philosophy and religion would coalesce into a new category and form a new power in life, of which the present could have no clear conception: "It has been said on different occasions that I am a pessimist. And that I am, in so far as I do not believe in the immortality of human ideals. But I am also an optimist in so far as I implicitly believe in the reproductive and progressive power of ideals. More definitely expressed, I believe that the ideals of our time in perishing pave the way towards that which in my drama of *Emperor and Galilean* I have referred to as the third kingdom—that which *is coming*."

Ibsen's acquaintance with Georg Brandes and his book, *Main Currents of 19th Century Literature*, was active in deciding the realistic character of his subsequent work. He found in Brandes one of his most open-minded critics, and at this time, the middle 'seventies, he was still interested in being "explained" to the public. Their acquaintance began with a mutual admiration, which did not wane. Friendship it is difficult to speak of in Ibsen's case. In one of his first letters to Brandes he recommends him to develop "a genuine, full-blooded egoism, which shall force you for a time to regard what concerns you as the only thing of consequence and everything else as non-existent." He speaks of friends as an expensive luxury. However, "the expense in having friends lies not so much in what one does for them as in what one omits to do because of them."

It was when he had already swept wide fields of human experience and treated questions of profound ethical significance, that Ibsen turned his eyes on life as he knew it in the little Norwegian coast-towns, where one felt so snug and safe, far from the wicked world, and thanked God that one was not like that publican. He saw the wider life reflected in the little town as in a convex mirror, which gives heightened distinctness for reduced dimensions. And, as the Norwegian critic Nils Kjær remarks, "The small town society contains the forms of life under the lid of respectability. All the vices are there, but in a quiet way. Only hypocrisy, and the cowardice which masks itself as modesty, grow freely and shade the others like dock-leaves."

As indicated in the beginning of the chapter, in the first series of plays, for which Ibsen now locked himself up in the ever-increasing concentration of his dramatic laboratory, he treats *social* problems; in those which follow, from *The Wild Duck* (1884) onwards, the *individual psychological* interest gains the upper hand, the philosophical undertone becoming ever more pronounced.

With the first play, *The Pillars of Society* (1887), we are down on the solid ground of realism, and exchange the ethereal voices of *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* and the pagan flutes of *Julian* for the music of the shipyard and office, wharf and town. Consul Bernick, the chief "Pillar of Society," has once committed an offence, the blame for which he has managed to shift on to another man's shoulders; for, what would become of society if he fell? He has contrived to ship the man for America in a "floating coffin," when the news that his son has run away to join the same ship stirs him to a feeling of guilt. He finally makes an open confession to his fellow-citizens, who have just come in procession to pay him their homage, and the little society receives the shock of its life.

The likeness of Ibsen's play to Bjørnson's *A Bankruptcy* (1875) is hardly fortuitous. In both we are shown a little town with its wicker idol of a local great man. In both a whited sepulchre of hypocrisy is shattered by the truth, and women are mainly effective in the restoration of a healthier kind of life.

The League of Youth had shown that Ibsen was no champion of the existing Liberal party. *The Pillars of Society* dispelled the illusion that he was the poet of Conservatism; for the "Pillars" proved to be as rotten as the "League" was raw. The two parties were left looking at the representation of each other after the curtain had risen between them, both equally annoyed at the stage manager's trick.

The Pillars of Society had more effect in Denmark, which was in advance of Norway in social consciousness. It was Ibsen's first great European success. In February 1878 it was in one week performed simultaneously on five different Berlin stages, in more or less indifferent translations. In 1880 it was performed in an abbreviated translation by Mr. William Archer at the Gaiety Theatre, and the author was called for. In this play—as Mr. Archer has pointed out—the author "still holds with Scribe that the business of the dramatist is not to obey the psychological necessity, but to invent plausible means of avoiding it, in the interest of popular optimism."

This consideration is thrown overboard in the next drama, *A Doll's House* (1879). In the author's "Notes to the modern tragedy" (i.e. *A Doll's House*), it is stated that "there are two kinds of mental laws, two kinds of conscience: one in man, and a quite different one in woman. The two do not understand one another; still, woman is in actual life judged by the law of man. . . . She cannot be herself in a totally masculine society."

The female instinct is personified in Nora, the Doll, the Child-wife; existing "masculine" society is represented by her husband Helmer. Nora has forged a cheque to be able to take her husband to Italy, when that seemed the only way of saving his life. She is very proud of her secret; to her it seems a noble act, and she is quite undisturbed by her conscience. When Helmer is informed of it, and Nora expects him to take the blame on himself, to "do the wonderful thing," she is sorely disappointed. For Helmer's only thought is about *himself*. Helmer has been provided with all the accepted regular social virtues, and he no doubt behaves quite correctly. When the danger of divulgence is past, Helmer's character comes out further: "Nora, I am saved!"—"And what about me?" says Nora in her new toneless voice. It has dawned on her that their married life is unnatural and will be impossible,

and she leaves her children and leaves her husband, the latter in hopeless perplexity. His momentary brightening and whisper about "the wonderful thing" that might still happen is cut short by the bang of the heavy front door.

The stir created by *A Doll's House* was something unprecedented. Nora's declaration that she was a human being even before being a wife, led to the author being accused of immorality, of wanting to loosen the marriage tie. And so far as morals means resting and relying on *mores*, Ibsen is, of course, anti-moral.

Ibsen let people talk for a year or two, and then appeared on the scene again with his *Ghosts* (1881). Here is a woman who remains faithful to an unworthy man. She has long been a widow at the opening of the play. The dramatist has here established his retrospective method: things have taken place before the action begins, and are invisibly present in the rapid unfolding of the results.

In 1872 and 1875 had appeared J. P. Jacobsen's Danish translations of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*. Ibsen, as was his wont, studied the new intellectual movements less in books than in their reflection in the minds of people. In the philosophy of Evolution he fixed on the question of heredity and the responsibilities connected with it. *Gjengangere*—revenants—are not merely floating ghosts but something that walks on in the material forms of descendants, so that the tread is heard. Here the deceased libertine Captain Alving walks his doomed son Oswald over the brink of incurable dementia. In the closing scene Oswald, his reason giving way, asks for the golden sun, and his mother is left in the dilemma whether or not to do him the promised service of administering the morphia powders.

In the storm that followed the publication of *Ghosts*, Bjørnson was among the few who stemmed the tide, calling *Gjengangere* "if not Ibsen's greatest drama, at least his noblest deed." The author disclaimed all responsibility for the much-tried Mrs. Alving's particular views. He only insisted that they were typical of the moral chaos produced by pious conventionalists like Pastor Manders, to whom young Mrs. Alving had fled when she discovered her husband's character, and who had inexorably sent her back to her "duty."

The dramatist contrived to make a number of observations during the *Ghosts* commotion, and made them useful in his next play, *An Enemy of the People* (1882). Here there is no doubt about the author being wholly present; for the fiery Dr. Stockman is two-thirds Ibsen; in the remaining third both Bjørnson and Lie have a share. Outspoken Stockman is an Ibsen who can talk.

Dr. Stockman would rather see his town crumble down than thrive on a poisonous lie. He has proved that the water of the baths on which the town depends are polluted, and would have the evil purged away. But then the baths would have to be closed, and the doctor runs up against the opinion of the "compact majority," which is like the *Bøig* in *Peer Gynt*. In his speech on the question before a large meeting, he discusses the nature of the truths round which majority generally rallies. "A normally constituted truth lives seventeen or eighteen years—twenty years at the outside. At that age they are very dry and thin; they are like rancid salt pork, and are responsible for most of the moral scurvy that pesters society." So Dr. Stockman gets his windows smashed and is dubbed an "Enemy of the People." But the soothsayer paces his floor in unquenchable spirits, realizing that the strongest man is he who stands alone.

Stockman-Ibsen knew that when a truth has been taken in, its time is over, as is the case with food: if it should retain its form it would work serious mischief. A few years later he declared, "At the point where I stood when I wrote each of my books, there now stands a fairly compact crowd; but I myself am no longer there; I am elsewhere—further ahead, I hope."

Having freed his mind through the mouthpiece of Dr. Stockman, Ibsen began by way of reaction to ask himself whether unadulterated truth is the best food for human nature generally, or whether a considerable addition of illusion is not necessary to make life livable for the average man and woman. In *The Wild Duck* (1884) he comes to the latter conclusion. The world *will* be deceived so that it may live. The photographer Hjalmar Ekdal's home is founded on illusions: the relation between man and wife, the old father who revives his hunting days by shooting rabbits among the old Christmas-trees in the attic, the actual wild duck which has its lake in a trough and is exchanged in a fatal moment for the real wild duck, their daughter Hedvig. Into this house which hangs together somehow by the women's work (while the photographer is dozing after meals over his great prospective invention), comes Gregers Werle, an ideally minded man, the son of the merchant who had originally matched the couple for his own convenience and established the home on a basis of lies and secrecy. Gregers comes as an exterminator of lies, declaring candour to be the only solid foundation of family life. And the home is wrecked by his ideal demand. As the sensible but callous Dr. Relling says: "Life would not be so bad after all, if we might only be free from these duns who go about to poor people's doors with their bill of the ideal demand."

The Wild Duck is the first of the wholly symbolical plays; it marks a corner between the foregoing social dramas and the following psychological ones, but its main front faces the future. Ibsen has told how, in preparing his plays, he became gradually better acquainted with his characters, first fell in with them casually, then altered his opinion of them by closer familiarity, until at last they were as old friends. In an early sketch of *The Wild Duck* the sentimental humbug, Hjalmar Ekdal, narrates the dinner-party—where he cut a very poor figure—as though it was he who was the conductor of the proceedings. In the final form, with great advance in character-drawing, he is led on by those at home by their expectations to give the impression, without supplying any deliberate untruth, that naturally he was the axis on which the whole turned.

In one of his few speeches, to the working men at Trondhjem, in 1885, Ibsen impressed on his hearers the necessity of an element of nobility entering our public life; "not a nobility of birth—or money—or knowledge—or talents, but a nobility of character, of will and soul. That alone can make us free."

In *Rosmersholm* (1886), the old family seat with its noble tradition is the dominating factor. The last member of the family, the retired parson Rosmer, has lived there with his wife. A young woman, Rebecca West, has come into the house to assist the invalid mistress. Rebecca, who wants the still young priest for herself, has given hints to his poor, melancholy wife which make her end her days in the waterfall. However, Rebecca herself is involuntarily ennobled by the influence of the Rosmer family tradition, which breathes from everything in the house, and finally she confesses her guilt to the widower: "The Rosmer view ennobles, but it kills happiness." Rosmer can now live neither with nor without her, and together they follow his wife into the waterfall. "The late mistress took them," as the housekeeper says; and it was Rosmersholm that gave them into her power.

Of the features of nature which attracted Ibsen, the chief throughout his life was the sea. As with the fells and moors, it was probably the feeling of unbounded *space* that appealed most to him. Longing for home blended with this longing for the sea. Both from Rome and from Munich he wrote that the view of the sea was what he most lacked there, and he pictured to himself a return to a house on a Norway fjord with an opening out to the great ocean. But when he arrived at the possibility of realizing this desire, he found that "here by the fjords is my native land, but where is my homeland? It is the sea which draws me most." He came nearest to it in 1887 and 1888, when he spent some months in a small Jutland town, Sæby.

In his solitary rambles on the North Sea shore, the feeling of the Immensity, as also of the Life, of the sea took hold of his imagination and merged with his philosophy of evolution. Questions like these appear in his notes from this time: "Has ascending man lost his way?—Why do we belong to the dry earth? Why not to the air? Or to the sea?—Whence this longing for the Sea? Whence the desire for wings? Strange dreams in which one flies as a matter of course—how is all this to be explained?" He speculates on the attraction of the sea, the hypnotizing effect that grand scenery has on the human mind.

Ellida is "*The Lady from the Sea*," who, as Dr. Wangel's wife in the inner recesses of a fjord, appears like a landlocked mermaid. A mysterious seaman, to whom she has once been betrothed, comes to demand her as his. She feels bound to this merman as by a fascination, and it is only when Dr. Wangel gives her a free choice that the spell is broken. Her husband's generous trust has had the effect that church bells have on one who has been taken into the mountain—*bergtaken*—by the trolls. Freedom with responsibility is the magic word, liberating from the spell of unknown forces.

Hedda Gabler (1890) is a remarkable study of an incomplete female out of whom over-culture has washed the savour of all the natural instincts, leaving behind only a sort of intellectual and æsthetic curiosity. Her fellow-creatures are to her mere objects for experimentation. General Gabler's daughter, having danced herself tired, has married Jorgen Tesman, a naïve pedant, one of the almost criminally naïve people whose influence on the development of evil is depicted by Shakespeare. His ever-recurring phrase is: "Fancy that!" (*Tænk dér!*), which he utters even at the final catastrophe over his wife's body: "Shot herself, shot herself through the temple . . . Fancy that!" To her former suitor Hedda has given one of her loaded pistols with the injunction: "Do it beautifully—you must promise me that!" One is inclined to agree with another personage of the play that "such things are not said."

Ibsen disclaims the intention of discussing any problems here: "What I principally wanted to do was to depict human beings, human emotions, and human destinies upon a groundwork of the social conditions and principles of the present day." It is doubtful whether he ever drew a stronger picture. The characters are not only grouped with extraordinary skill, but they are organically united in the time that goes before the play. The portion of the picture which lies before our eyes is highly finished, and it also gives the sense of being reliably connected with an environing world outside its frame.

It is significant that after the completion of this drama Ibsen had the feeling of a definite void. At the same time he was thankful that he had finished the commercialized connection with those creatures of his imagination. In the following drama, *Rygmester Solness* (The Master Builder, 1892), a certain nervousness tends to conceal that depth of psychic vision which Henrik Ibsen had displayed in *Le Trésor des humbles*. Nevertheless points out that the young girl Hilde and Solness — are two souls to whom a fatal law revealed their salvation in the true life . . . and when it happens that we meet one of the souls who are thus known to us, though we do but speak of the same thing or the weather that goes by, something there is to be said of us which ends to the other, which ourselves and souls ourselves without our knowledge, which immense world is contemporary and knows at events that we cannot understand . . . And if we are at times bewildered by this strange correspondence of souls, we may be reminded by Maeterlinck that the soul appears to our feeble eyes to be but the shadow of forces and that there are to most many regions more formal, more profound and more interesting than those of the reason or the intelligence."[1]

But we have in Ibsen's work, very different in this from that gentle mystic dreamer Maeterlinck, no way of the misty hamlet. He builds his castle up into the air from a very solid groundwork of concrete fact. Upon Ibsen's workshop was a discussion of *The Master Builder*, of the likeness that have been found between Solness and the poet himself, who in some early verses dreams of building his castle, and did build great, symbolical, poetic dramas, and afterwards such as were more like homes for human beings — as parallels between Solness and Hilde on the one hand and Rosmer and the young Kaiser on the other[2] or other imaginations of Ibsen criticism. We must limit ourselves to a brief review of the three last dramas.

Little Eyolf (1894) is the story of a child accidentally crippled at a moment when his parents were forgetting him in their fond egotism a dark always lurking in the relation between man and woman. It is the father's desire to cultivate the boy's mind, so that he may some day continue his own work and be a writer. The mother, a strong, beautiful, and passionate woman, will share her husband's love with no one; but the boy all hold on him when, by a second accident, little Eyolf is drowned. To fill the void in her life she will make a home for the poor children of the town, and her husband proposes to join her in that work. Then for once in

[1] English translation, *The Treasure of the Humble*, p. 4. Theatre.

[2] Edgar Lang in a noteworthy article in *Neue Freie Presse*, 1901.

Ibsen's drama, there opens—but at what cost!—the prospect of a happy married life.

In the preparation of his next work, the dramaturge shows a certain anxiety about its completion; an accident might happen to him, and what then?—*John Gabriel Borkman* (1896) is a wrecked genius, "a Napoleon of finance, wounded for life in his first battle." He has been in prison for years, and his wife cannot forgive him the scandal. Returning to his home, he has only passed from one cage to another, and spends his time pacing the room, always expecting the deputation through which the world should come and implore his pardon and help. But it never comes, and Borkman at last is drawn by the call of the unreleased ore out into the winter night. Over his dead body are finally reconciled two sisters, the one he had loved and the other whom he had married for money—"we two twin sisters over him we both have loved,—we two shadows, over the dead man."

Naar Vi Døde Vaagner (*When We Dead Awaken*, 1899) is Ibsen's Last Judgment on himself. It is a confrontation of the Artist with Life, which he had used only for the purposes of his art, and which, when used, he threw aside. Life takes her revenge when he, the Dead, the lifeless, wakes up and reaches for her too late. While the sculptor Rubek had eyes and heart only for his task, the group of the *Resurrection*—his model, Irene, was full of passion for him. When "their child," the group, was completed and he thanked her for this happiest episode in his life, she fled; and she "died of it" and was lowered down into the grave-vault of an asylum cell. They meet again after many years, in the mountains, and make for the heights together. An avalanche thunders the "Too late!" and the closing words of Irene's nurse: "*Pax Vobiscum!*" come like a mocking echo of Irene's name, Peace!

This short play is called *A Dramatic Epilogue*, and so it became—to all Ibsen's work. It appeared later than expected—for Ibsen's dramas had for long been regular biennial events—and was written with such labour and passionate agitation that those around him were almost alarmed. He *must* get on with it, he must get on! And not long after, his brain began to be battered by blows that darkened the outward world to him during the last five years, until his death in April 1906.

In his preface to the collected edition of his works, Ibsen asks the reader kindly to treat them as a whole, to read them in their chronological order, and leave none out, if he will get the right meaning of the work.

It would be well if we could take with us from the study of

Ibsen's works the impression of the unity in their variety: that they are bound each to each like the living links of a growing organism, each holding and held by the other, though with their different functions. As for the general, total effect, if they have not communicated any desired consistent philosophy of their own, they may have given something more valuable—the salutary shaking up of a breezy ride—to one's own personal philosophy. Then one will realize that Henrik Ibsen did unflinchingly what he set out to do—perhaps the greatest thing the artist can achieve—to see, and say what he saw, in such a way that we feel scales fall from our eyes.

CHAPTER XIII

JONAS LIE

IN a letter from the first period of his authorship, Jonas Lie complains that the Norwegian poets up to that time have not given the people a "poetic reflection" of its own life. What they have given in this respect is not much more than short glimpses of no duration—rockets which, after being fired, leave the nation behind with the black, burnt paper and no work of lasting life. What he wanted to do was to hold up to his people such a poetic reflection of its life.

JONAS LAURITZ IDEMIL LIE was born on the 6th of November 1833 at Eiker, near Drammen. His father, at that time a solicitor, was the grandson of a man who, by his industry and intelligence, had made his way from his father's farm to the position of the most influential man of Trondhjem. The mother of our author was the daughter of a woman from Helgeland and was believed to have some Finnish blood in her veins. Now the *trønder* have a long-established reputation for stubbornness of will, and, when they are intellectually gifted, for a strong sense of logic as well as of life's realities. The *nordlendinger* are equally well known for their prolific and fantastic imagination. Jonas Lie, it will be seen, presents a most curious combination of all those qualities.

In 1838, when Jonas Lie was four or five years old, his father was appointed sheriff of Tromsø in the very North of the country, and there the family lived till Jonas was almost twelve. During those years he received the mighty impressions of the scenery and life of Northern Norway that were to make of him *Nordlandsdikteren*, the poet of Nordland. From his own confession we know that he was no brilliant scholar in those early days. He was much more interested in the work of the fishermen and the fights of the boys in the street than in his lessons, and had besides a knack of forgetting everything about him and staring emptily into space. He was so much behind the other boys in the lower grammar school, that his parents at last thought it best to take him out of it and let him become a sailor as he wanted to himself. When his father was appointed a district judge in Sunnhordland,

south of Bergen, Jonas was sent to the naval school at Fredriksvern ; but after a year of probation, he had to abandon every thought of ever becoming a seaman—he was too near-sighted. He had, however, learnt much about the sea and the sailors—a knowledge he largely turned to account in his later writings. There was now no helping it, he must take up the ordinary school and University studies. After four years in Bergen and a final grind at old Heltberg's " Student Factory " in Kristiania, he matriculated in 1851, with rather bad marks.

In the years now following, Jonas Lie went about without any regular work—University work or other. He read a good deal of literature, and took much interest in the events of the day, both at home and abroad. At the " Student Factory " he had made the acquaintance of his fellow-student, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, and, in the wider circle of the students, also that of Ibsen and Vinje, who had left the school before he came. The acquaintance with Ibsen and Vinje at this time seems to have been quite superficial, but with Bjørnson he soon became close friends. Bjørnson was then as always the centre of a circle of admirers, and Jonas Lie was among the most fervent of them all. In a letter from a later time, Lie acknowledges his indebtedness to Bjørnson at this early period. Bjørnson, he says, discovered bright glimpses of northern light, with streamers and merry dancers, in the middle of the strange twilight of Jonas Lie's soul ; he " helped and guided and found grains of gold where others mostly saw nonsense or even a crack." While Lie " erred about, running after the spiritual cat-silver with which the wits of the time shone," Bjørnson taught him that for materials for his future poetry he must turn to whatever he might himself possess of " simplicity and inwardness "—just what Lie up to then had looked on as mere rubbish. It was, Lie goes on, " the glittering covering of images around the gold of Wergeland's mighty poetry that had seduced a congenial feeling for nature in myself. And this covering it was that you, with a never-failing patience and interest in my development, helped me to throw off."

Many years were to pass, however, before Bjørnson's teaching bore any visible fruit. Only among his friends was he known as the man who was to become a poet. After he had taken his degree of Law—for which he studied for more than seven years—he first became junior clerk in some ministry, until in 1859 he settled down as a lawyer at Kongsvinger, a little town near the Swedish border. Thanks to some influential friend, he obtained the representation of one or two important Kristiania banks, and this at once gave him a social as well as financial position in the small but wealthy

town. In 1860 he married a first cousin, THOMASINE LIE, a highly gifted woman, who was to have a great influence on her husband's future work. Jonas Lie soon had very handsome incomes, and as both he and his wife were very sociable people, they entertained on a large scale. So did the other rich people of the place, and thus the evenings were as occupied with amusements as the days were with work, Jonas Lie being among the foremost in both respects.

He did not forget his literary interests, however. A few years after he had come to Kongsvinger he bought an illustrated weekly paper in Kristiania, in which he himself wrote the articles on foreign politics for several years. He revealed himself as an excellent student of his subject, and his articles were read not only in Norway, but also in the other Scandinavian countries. It is quite astonishing to see how clear-sighted he was in many things. What he wrote of the character and political aims of Napoleon III., for instance, is in almost complete accord with the judgment given in the *Grande Encyclopédie* about 1900 by an eminent French historian. And Jonas Lie wrote as early as 1866, while the Emperor was still at the height of his glory!

But the combination of the work of the journalist with that of the lawyer and financier could not be kept up long. In 1866 Lie had to give up his journalism. This year, however, he published his first book, a tiny volume of verse, mostly occasional poems, of which only a few betray talent and originality in their author. If he had any literary vocation, it was evident that he had not yet found his own true expression, in spite of his thirty-three or thirty-four years. As might be expected, his book attracted much less notice than his political articles had done.

About this time began a great financial and commercial crisis, which, as far as Jonas Lie was concerned, was to end in complete ruin a little more than a year after. The cause was a great and sudden fall in the timber market, and Jonas Lie, engaged in many great enterprises in one of our greatest timber districts, was driven to bankruptcy, with a deficiency of some forty thousand pounds. He was by this time thirty-five years old and had a wife and three children to provide for, and was now obliged to leave his work and everything, returning to Kristiania a socially as well as economically ruined man.

But with the stubbornness of the *trønder* Jonas Lie was not going to give in. If he had failed in one direction, he must try in another, and so he returned to his first love, literature. To gain a living for himself and his family, he began by doing journalistic work of every kind for the great newspapers. His first employment was as writer of short political surveys for the most despised

of all the daily papers, for a fee of some thirteen shillings a week—with the result that the paper was soon read even by people who before would not have touched it with a pair of tongs. He also wrote for Danish and Swedish periodicals, and contributed more or less regularly to several Norwegian daily and weekly papers.

In the midst of his cares and his numerous journalistic occupations he also found time to write his first novel, a rather bulky product. He read it to his wife, who declared her firm belief in him as a novelist, and who next cut away about half of the original manuscript. In the new shape the book was read to Bjørnson, who, at once enthusiastic about it, sat down and wrote to his publisher: "I have just read Jonas Lie's novel. Have it printed at once, make all possible haste, have it sent up to the North, all over Scandinavia, before Christmas; it will shine like a white sea-gull in the grey winter sky." This letter was written on the 31st of October 1870; the book was out before Christmas, and in the following six months there were two new editions. By that time Jonas Lie had a name as a novelist. The book that won it for him was *Den Fremsynte, eller Billeder fra Nordland* (The Visionary, or Pictures from Nordland).

The Visionary is the love story of a young couple, or rather two children, from Nordland. The boy, David Holst, is gifted with the second sight, a gift he has inherited, together with a disposition for insanity, from his mother's family. Between him and his playmate Susanne, the rector's daughter, there grows up a love that is to decide the lives of both. On the representations of the old family doctor, David resolves to give up the young girl, but she will not give him up, and finally overcomes every resistance —but the day after she has obtained her father's consent, she is drowned. In a letter to his publisher, Jonas Lie writes of his book: "The poetic point of my story, which I hope will be understood, is love's power of healing the sick mind. Just as there is a remedy for the mentally diseased person in sitting under a tree listening to the rustling leaves that whisper health into his soul, so a true love possesses this power of healing in a degree as much higher as it is a deeper natural relation to rest in, a deeper and mightier source of health than inanimate Nature." When, as in this case, the Gordian knot, instead of being untied, is cut by death, Jonas Lie is undoubtedly right. But the question—what would have happened if the marriage had taken place?—rests unanswered.

What charms one in *The Visionary* is not only its really heart-gripping story, but almost as much its truly poetic descriptions of Nordland life and scenery. When *Den Fremsynte* appeared, that

part of our country was an unknown province to most Norwegians, and in literature it had hardly been mentioned since the time of Petter Dass. *The Visionary* revealed it to be a kind of Wonderland, where Nature, with its purple sky and its midnight sun, and its stormy winter night of three months, as well as the life of the people, with its passions and visions and fantastic beliefs, in short, everything, was proportionate, as it were, with the enormous distances.

In his book on Jonas Lie—on which anybody speaking or writing of this author is obliged to draw rather freely—Arne Garborg says : " Few books will stand the following test :—you read it in your youth and are transported by it ; then you read it again twenty years after and are transported as much, finding it as new as the first time. I have had the opportunity of putting *Den Fremsynte* to this test, and it stood it splendidly. No book that is only up to the requirements of the time would stand it so well ; only the personal works, those that are sprung blood-hot from their author's own struggle for life and development, have, I believe, the power of keeping as fresh and alive through all changes of current and fashion."

In the following year, 1871, Jonas Lie applied for and obtained a grant from the Storting in order to make a journey through Nordland to study life and natural conditions there in view of further literary production. Later in the same year he got another grant to go abroad " to educate himself as an author." From now Jonas Lie's history is chiefly that of his writings, and we may therefore as well give here the outlines of his subsequent life. After he had received the last-named grant he went to Italy, where he stayed for three years, passing his winters in Rome, his summers mostly in the little township of Rocca di Papa, on the Alban Mount. In 1874 he returned to Kristiania, but left again three years later. From 1878 to 1882 he lived in different places in Germany, chiefly Stuttgart, Dresden, Hamburg, and Berchtesgaden, a township in Southern Bavaria. From 1882 to 1906, two years before his death, he lived in Paris, with one or two longer interruptions. His summers he regularly passed in Berchtesgaden, and there many of his works were written. His home in Paris for a number of years was the centre of the numerous Norwegian artists, students, and authors that came to Paris for a shorter or longer time. Although living in a voluntary exile, his interest in the affairs of his country was as strong as ever, as may be seen from the anecdotes of the way in which he on different occasions acted as an unofficial representative of our country, at a time when our official representatives —who were also those of Sweden—showed only a moderate zeal for Norway's interests and honour.

Jonas Lie's next book after *The Visionary* was *Fortællinger og Skildringer fra Norge* (Stories and Sketches from Norway), published in 1872. Of the four *Stories and Sketches*, that about the *Nordfjord Pony* (Eng. trans., *Little Grey*, 1873) is the best known, and the first of Jonas Lie's works to attract notice among the English public. The story of this hardy, intelligent, and formerly much misused animal is told with a touching grace and simplicity, without any sentimentality, and has, says one of our critics, made the world-fame both of its author and of its subject. Among the other contents of the volume we mention *Finn-Blood*, a weird tale of a boy who in a fever vision visits the hall of *draugen* (a malicious water-sprite) at the bottom of the sea.

Later in the same year, 1872, appeared the great novel *Tremasteren "Fremtiden," eller Liv Nordpaa* (The Three-master "Future," or, Life in the North), the story of a young man of the people who by his industry and intelligence creates a good position for himself and wins the heart and hand of his former employer's daughter. The story is well told and very interesting, in spite of its many digressions to describe the life and manners and scenery of Nordland. In fact, there is so much of such description that the book, as Garborg says, has some flavour of being an account of the author's use of the money which the Storting granted him to study those things. The principal new thing about the book is that it for the first time introduces money into Norwegian literature by treating, with knowledge of the subject, the downfall of a big commercial firm.

The subject of Jonas Lie's next novel, *Lodsen og hans Hustru* (The Pilot and his Wife, 1874), was taken from the life of the Norwegian sailor at home and abroad. The treatment shows a thorough acquaintance with this subject, which had not until then been treated in our literature. The chief thing is, however, not the sketches from the sailor's life, but the story of the love and marriage of the Pilot and his Wife. Their love is constantly in danger of being poisoned and their marriage of being wrecked by the husband's doubts of his wife's love. For years she is submissive and patient, hoping that he shall one day understand that his suspicions are wholly unjustified ; but not until she revolts, putting aside her humility and standing upon her dignity, does he learn to respect her, and his confidence comes back.

What Bjørnson with his Peasant Tales had been doing for one class of the people, that Jonas Lie, with his *Stories and Sketches*, *The Three-master "Future,"* and now with *The Pilot and his Wife*, was doing for another class, the sailors and fishermen. To be treated thus seriously in serious literature gave them a status in

the intellectual life of the country which greatly added to their self-esteem and to their sense of civic responsibility. No wonder that these books, and especially *The Pilot and his Wife*, were received with enthusiasm. In a few months there came two new editions of *The Pilot*, and in April of the same year, 1874, the Storting unanimously granted to the author the same "poet's stipend" of four hundred dollars a year which had been previously given to Bjørnson and Ibsen.

In spite of the triumph of *The Pilot and his Wife*, and in spite of the nation's recognition of him as their *dikter*, the years that now follow were perhaps the most difficult of all in Jonas Lie's literary career. Naturalism—or realism, as it is generally called in the Scandinavian literatures—had just set in. Its relentless unveiling of things that had hitherto been carefully hidden, its open debating of all kinds of problems, and its prying into questions ignored by the ordinary reader and playgoer, was not what Jonas Lie thought to be his literary vocation. He had a certain instinctive fear of and repugnance to the new ways, which he was afraid would lead away from true poetry. Poetic literature should, according to him, give a poetic reflection of human life, each national poet giving life as led and seen by his particular people; and he felt it as a danger to poetic truthfulness if authors were to introduce their own purposes into their creations instead of letting life speak entirely for itself.

But as a matter of fact, the problems of the day had already invaded literature, and Jonas Lie was participating too intensely in the intellectual life of his time to keep the problems out of his writings. They had even stolen into his first books. The "poetic point" of *The Visionary* is not only the healing power of love; it also implies that part of the woman question for which Camilla Collett was fighting in her writings, the right of woman's love to choose for itself. The same problem crops up again in *The Three-master "Future"* and in *The Pilot and his Wife*, each time more distinctly and with a wider bearing. Lie thus had to recognize that the problems of the day would come in, do what he might, and in the following works we see him grappling with this difficulty: how he was to get room for his contribution to the solution of actual questions without giving up anything of the truth. It took him several long and painful years to arrive at an answer.

Jonas Lie's first attempt in the new vein was *Thomas Ross* (1878). In the interval between this work and *The Pilot* (1874) he had only published a dramatic poem, *Faustina Strozzi* (1875), his only work with a foreign subject; in spite of some fine lyrical

parts and some lively descriptions of Italian life and scenery, this work is among the author's weakest.

Thomas Ross is the story of a young poet and dramatist, and of his hesitation between two women, the dark, witty, lazy, and heartless Annie Wilkens and the fair, intelligent, and energetic Katarina Linstow. The one only wants him to swell her retinue, and measures the interest she shows him by the splendour he for the time being can be expected to add to her glory, while the other loves him, though not with a blind love, which would be dangerous to him, but with a clear-sighted and far-seeing love that even dares criticize him when everybody else flatters him.

The expectations raised by the author's long silence and by the fact that *Thomas Ross* was the first great novel dealing with life in the Norwegian capital, were largely disappointed. Not only is it a mere subordinate circumstance that the action takes place in Kristiania, but we have serious difficulties in believing fully in the characters of its persons, especially in the deliberate and fully conscious villainy of the dark woman, while the fair woman, on the other hand, is too unfailingly in the right, although she is too wilful to be described as an angel. And whether intentional or not, the thesis of the book is a rather philistine warning against what is new. Only two things were pretty clear, that Jonas Lie had not yet found his own form and way, and that the Conservative party had some reason for their hope of finding at last an ally among our great authors.

If the criticism from the Liberals was discouraging to Jonas Lie, the incense he received from the Conservatives was no less so—he felt as if everything combined to tempt him away from the narrow path of art and into the political struggle. But he clenched his teeth and stopped his ears, and the next year he had finished another novel, *Adam Schrader* (1879). Although Lie still tries to keep out the "problems" from his work, *Adam Schrader* discusses several of the questions raised by the contemporary debate on the emancipation of women, especially those concerning woman's place in home and society. The book contains much acute observation; among other things it gives a good description of life in a Norwegian watering-place. Its characters are more credible than those of *Thomas Ross* — they are also more of everyday people. But the work is lacking in intensity, never shows us a full-fledged passion or makes us live through the pinch of life's everyday difficulties. And as its hero is past youthful impatience and youthful buoyancy, so we have an impression that the author has little sympathy with what he seems to regard as immature pursuit of novelty: the contemporary

struggle for liberty of expression. *Adam Schrader* met with the same reception as *Thomas Ross*.

During these years of adversity, Jonas Lie was certainly nearer than at any other period to becoming a Conservative, conservatism being, when it is a matter of temperament and deep-seated conviction and not only of calculation, a sort of want of confidence either in oneself or in the society one is living in. What discouraged Jonas Lie was not only the poor success of his literary work, and the constant oppression of his formidable debt, but quite as much his political disillusions. In foreign politics he had felt it as personal blows when Prussia beat and robbed first Denmark, then France, without anybody coming to their rescue. In national politics there had for a number of years been a slackening of the claims and an abatement of the faith of the Independence party. Those defeats of his ideals harassed him for years. But little by little his strong nature refused to be weighed down by his disillusions, especially as new signs of hope appeared towards the end of the seventies. France, the country that had his strongest sympathy next his own, began to recover from the blow Germany had dealt her. And in Norway there was a revival of the spirit of independence that promised to bear down whatever resistance it might meet with. We can see from Jonas Lie's letters from this time that both those circumstances acted as mighty stimulants on him, and it is a new energy we are met by in his following works.

The first sign of the new courage is the three-act play, *Grabow's Cat* (1880). One of the points of it is the conflict between old and young, and the author's sympathy is clearly on the side of youth. Unfortunately, his critics hardly noticed this point, occupied as they were with another, namely, love's power of making a man develop whatever is in him of greatness or genius. One critic found such a thesis mere philistine sentimentality. Jonas Lie, who had made it a rule never to reply to any criticism, this time made an exception by telling the charming story of a Dutch painter who, by his love for a young girl, became one of the great artists of his country.

It looks as if Jonas Lie, in turning to drama, hoped thereby to find a means of treating modern life with its social and moral problems without giving up anything of the poetic truth. But *Grabow's Cat* was not the success its author had hoped for, and so he returned to the novel, even to the sea novel.

Rutland (autumn, 1880) is the story of the married life of Captain Kristensen of the schooner "Rutland." Both the skipper and his wife —who lives on board with her husband—are people with a character, with a will of their own, and this quality is also inherited by their

son. The author's object is to show the inevitable conflicts between such characters, and also the possibility and the means of overcoming them, if but the marriage be founded on love and mutual esteem. This was the time when the woman question, as raised by John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women*, was being most eagerly discussed in the Scandinavian countries—it was the year after the publication of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Such a " balancing of the powers " as in *Rutland* was something new in the discussion, but it was shown in such a discreet way that it did not attract much notice in the heat of the debate. What was noticed about the book, and what made it a great success, were the fresh pictures from sea life, and the author's gift of narrating everyday events so as to make them passionately interesting. At the same time it confirmed the belief that Jonas Lie was a master of his art only as long as he kept to his old domain, the sea, and the life of the uneducated classes. He himself was sure his critics were mistaken in that, but now he had full confidence in himself and could take his time to prove that he need not accept any such limits.

In this same year, 1880, Ole Bull, the greatest Norwegian violinist, and in his lifetime perhaps the greatest of the world, died, and Jonas Lie, who for many years had been his friend, was asked by Bull's family to write his biography. This work occupied him for the best part of the following year, and was published as an introduction to Ole Bull's Letters. We can only say that it is a most fascinating record of a man whose life in itself was like a fairy-tale.

Jonas Lie's next novel, and the one with which he definitely takes his farewell of sea life, is *Gaa paa !* (Go Ahead ! 1882). It is the story of Rejer Jansen Juhl, who, although belonging to the family that for ages has been the cork, as it were, of the bottled-up district of Aafjorden, breaks with the family tradition and goes out into the world to become an independent man, and who at last returns home with a new spirit of life and activity to his old, decrepit district. Aafjorden to Jonas Lie represents Norwegian society about the middle of the last century, and Rejer Jansen Juhl stands for the new current of ideas that made their way into it, chiefly by the activity of Georg Brandes and of the newer Norwegian poets. Norwegian society had to a great extent been isolating itself from the new and fresh currents of European thought, and Ibsen had, a few years before *Gaa paa !* made the Reverend Rørlund in *Pillars of Society* express the self-satisfied opinions of the bottled-up on their isolation. During Jonas Lie's years of doubt and disillusion, there had been times when the Rev. Rørlund's fear of new things had also to some extent been his, as we may see from passages of

Thomas Ross and *Adam Schrader*; *Go Ahead!* clearly shows that he has now completely overcome it.

With *Gaa paa!* Jonas Lie had definitely taken his place among the "European" authors of Norway, that is, among the literary realists. In his following works he like the others took up, and avowedly, the discussion of actual social and moral problems. But he did it in his own way, which often perplexed the critics and made it difficult to classify him. He was never a party-man, either in politics or in literature, although his sympathy might be quite whole-heartedly with one of the sides in a dispute.

Livsslaven (The Life Convict, 1883), and *Maisa Jons* (1888), are Jonas Lie's contributions to the discussion of the class problem. They are both Kristiania novels, one taking its subject from the life of the poor classes, the other from that of the "better" society people, but seen through the eyes of Maisa Jons, the poor sempstress who works in the most distinguished families. The public of the capital, who longed to get a peep in through their own windows, were much disappointed that Jonas Lie should have led them in by the servants' entrance, and the critics were bewildered because of the lack of class-hatred in the poor people, as one of them put it.

In *Familien paa Gilje* (The Family at Gilje, 1883), *Kommandørens Døtre* (The Commodore's Daughters, 1886), and *Et Samliv* (A Wedded Life, 1887), the author takes up again the woman question, which he had touched on in several of his former books. *The Family at Gilje, an Interior from the Forties*, gives the best picture we have got from the life of country functionaries at that period, and is in so far a continuation of Camilla Collett's descriptions in *The County Sheriff's Daughters*. In another respect, too, *The Family at Gilje* continues the work of Camilla Collett. Its principal theme is the parents' scheming and planning to get their daughters advantageously married, and the daughters' unsuccessful efforts to get the man they love. But Lie is much less of a doctrinary than Camilla Collett was, and has a far greater gift of making us see and understand the characters—in fact, he forces us to extend our sympathy even to the choleric captain who is the tyrant of all the family, but who also loves them in his own headstrong way.

The Family at Gilje is by many considered Jonas Lie's best work. It is the first where he has obtained complete mastery of his peculiar style, the object of which is to make us assist with all our senses at every scene we are introduced to, instead of having to reconstruct the scenes ourselves from the material given by the novelist. This object is attained, not by giving as complete details as possible of every place or event, but by fixing our attention on some characteristic, though perhaps unimportant, detail that will evoke in

us similar things from our own experience. The detail in question may be a smell, a sound, a peculiar position of some object, or even a sensation of some rather indefinite kind. The method may have its disadvantages in some kinds of narrative, but when the object is to rouse the reader's sympathetic interest in things he already knows but has slighted because he did not see their significance, then this manner may be without a rival. It may, of course, like any other literary manner, degenerate into mannerism, and some of Jonas Lie's critics have accused him of such degeneration in some of his later works.

The Commodore's Daughters—which title intentionally reminds us of *The County Sheriff's Daughters*—goes more into the problem of the right of woman's love to choose for itself. The two young girls have been taught by their mother and brother, the representatives of conventionality, to stand on their dignity above all—that is, not to trust any man or to show the slightest sign of their feelings for any man as long as he has not formally proposed to them and they have the consent of their parents to accept him. The elder daughter acts according to the teaching, though more out of vanity than of docility, and ends by freezing her lover away. But the younger, although in all other things the most docile of the two, acknowledges her love of her poor cousin, and refuses to give him up either for threats or for flattery. He dies, however, before they are permitted to marry, leaving her with child. Convention requires that this fact be hidden, and her family succeeds in hiding it; but poor Marthe dies from longing for her child. "Cecilie [the elder sister] was the first to notice that Marthe had expired; she took Jan [Marthe's son] in her arms. She had him to live for—crumbs, as it were, from poor Marthe's scanty board."

The Commodore's Daughters raised an animated discussion in all quarters. Up to then all feminists, male and female, had been unanimous in supporting the claim raised by Camilla Collett that woman's love should have the right of choosing for itself. But what if woman's love led to that not wholly unnatural consequence, the child? Jonas Lie's book made no secret of the author's support of love's cause even then. But many of the emancipation women were furious, refused indignantly to sympathize with people that behaved immorally like Marthe, and accused Lie of betraying the cause of woman by advocating the right of love to an immoral extent.

The particular point at issue in *A Wedded Life* is the conflict between a man's position as bread-winner and social support of his family, and that as his wife's lover and comrade. As the problem is of the most ordinary kind, so are also the characters;

but Lie has succeeded in making the story intensely interesting, partly, no doubt, because it is built upon his own personal experience.

With *Onde Magter* (Evil Forces, 1890), a new element enters Lie's writings. Up to this time he seems, as Garborg has pointed out, to have acted on the 18th-century creed that no man is evil —if he does evil it is only out of a sort of stupidity. But recent experiences, especially the breaking up of the old friendship between himself and Bjørnson, made it difficult for him to explain things in the old optimistic way. He set about searching for the causes of such inroads of evil into the lives of excellent people, and several of his following books are occupied with what this research revealed to him. In *Evil Forces*, Anders Bratt, the strong, self-made man, unconsciously envies his friend Johnston, the noble, sensitive man of old culture, his luck. By constantly harping upon certain circumstances of some of Johnston's business transactions, he makes him doubt whether his luck is not due to some clever though unconscious trickery on his own, Johnston's, part. And this doubt is enough to kill the thin-skinned Johnston. But might not the evil forces that got the better of Bratt have been overcome? Jonas Lie was bound to ask the question, and his answer to it he gives in the person of Bratt's daughter. She has inherited his dangerous dispositions, but thanks to her better education she is better aware of them, and thanks to her love she conquers them, or at least gives us reason to believe that she will. Thus Jonas Lie through the Slough of Despond regains his old faith: not even this book speaks of evil people, only of evil forces.

In his next books, two volumes of weird tales, *Trold I–II* (1891–92),[1] Jonas Lie connects these evil forces with the mystical or mysterious region of the human soul—the region between superstition and scientific fact which in our time is being explored and exploited by miracle-workers, spiritists, and psychic researchers. Lie had always had a secret conviction of the existence of such a region, but his strong sense of palpable reality had hitherto made it impossible for him to find any room for this strange side of life in his books, because he saw no plausible way of attaching it to established and "explained" facts. But towards the end of the eighties he became acquainted with some of the results of psychical research, and this helped him to find a theory of his own. Combining the Darwinian, or rather Lamarckian, theory of heredity with what he knew about spiritistic and mediumistic phenomena, he thought that deep in our nature there are survivals of our life at lower stages of evolution—elements which can no longer co-

[1] Eng. trans., *Weird Tales from Northern Seas*, by R. N. Bain, illustrated by L. Housman. Further translations, see List.

operate with our conscious personality, but which are strong enough to make irruption into our lives, where they, being strangers to our ordinary personality, are " explained " as spirits of all kinds—devils, demons, ogres, nixies, fairies, and whatever their names may be. In his introduction to *Trold I*, Lie gives a bit of his poetico-mystical creed, from which we quote the following few lines : " That there are trolls in men is a fact known to everybody with an eye for such things. They lie within the personality, binding it like immovable rock or capricious sea and unruly storm —big and small brutes—from the one mighty mountain—or sea-troll that may lie down with its will into the middle of life's stream, down to the nixie, the fairy, the elf, the goblin, or Robin Goodfellow, who go about making mischief, putting their caprices, their tricks, and their gambols into people."

Unfortunately these theoretical considerations can give no idea of the tragic beauty of some of the tales, of the genial humour of others. We may add that in some of them the fantastic form is merely a thin disguise for merry satire on certain social phenomena.

The idea of " trolls in men " or " evil forces " or different layers in the human soul may be traced in almost all Jonas Lie's subsequent works. It may be said to be the *leitmotif* of *Dyre Rein* (1896), of *Lindelin* (a four-act play, 1897), *The Ulfvungs, A Page of the Book of Passions* (1903), and *Østenfor Sol, Vestenfor Maane, og Bagom Babylons Taarn* (East of the Sun, West of the Moon, and Behind the Towers of Babylon, 1905), Lie's last book.

Dyre Rein, the most important of these books and one of its author's finest, is the tragic life- and love-story of a man who is terrified by the discovery of primitive, ungovernable forces in himself, so that he dare not link up the life of another person with his own. Nowhere in Lie's works do we find a deeper understanding of the mystical element in life, and never perhaps does his expression reach higher or more passionate poetry—written after its author had passed his sixtieth year.

Among Jonas Lie's other works we mention :

Niobe (1893), a novel of misdirected education. The children, who have never learnt discipline nor self-discipline, go to the dogs in the whirl of modern existence, and the mother, when she understands their utter uselessness, in despair blows up the house and, like Niobe of old, dies with her children.

Lystige Koner (Merry Wives, 1894) is a three-act comedy dealing with the empty and frivolous life to which society women are reduced when their husbands have spent what love they may have been gifted with in love-making with other women, before or after the marriage.

Faste Forland (1899) is the story of the born poet who would escape his vocation by investing his talent in financial and commercial enterprises, but who is driven back to it after a thundering bankruptcy—in short, Lie's own story. It is perhaps the one of all his books where his peculiar style and manner are best exhibited —both for good and evil—the production of suggestive detail, sometimes too zealously hunted for.

Wulffie and Co. (1900) is a three-act drama, dealing with the commercial morals of our time, the morals declaring everything to be honourable that will bring profit, provided at most that it is lawful. The example chosen is the eminently remunerative traffic in intoxicants. The subject, of course, did not please the play-going public, so that in spite of its dramatic qualities the drama had only a short run when played at the National Theatre of Kristiania.

It will be noticed that no subject had such an attraction for Jonas Lie as the home life, the relation between husband and wife. It may be interesting to see which was his conception of the ideal wife. The women who have the author's unreserved sympathy have all some traits in common: they are energetic and self-confident, and at the same time capable of passionate self-devotion; they do not permit themselves to be conquered, however, but bestow their love upon a man as a free and precious gift. It is possible that most women, and perhaps most men too, would make the objection to these women that they are too self-conscious, too unwomanly. Jonas Lie's idea seems to agree in the main with that of Bernard Shaw, although Lie never propounds any theory on the subject.

Almost all Jonas Lie's works were done in collaboration with his wife, Thomasine Lie. He generally had the idea of the book, and devised the plot—in one or two cases, however, it was invented by her—and also did the writing. But almost every important step forward was discussed with her; she suggested alterations or additions, and especially she cut away non-relevant matter. It has been doubted if her influence was all for the better; but Lie himself was sure that without her aid he should never have achieved what he did.

As already mentioned, Jonas Lie did not return to his country till 1906, two years before his death. In 1893–94 he had passed some months in Norway, at Holskogen, near Kristianssand, and had thought of settling down at home for good. On his sixtieth birthday, in 1893, he had been saluted by the students of Kristiania with a torch-light procession. He was then at the height of his popularity, maybe the most popular of our great authors, and

he felt himself happy as perhaps never before. Circumstances, however, made him return to Paris, where he remained till he had paid off all his old debt—for through all his literary life he had been paying off the enormous deficiency from his bankruptcy in 1868. Curiously enough, he did not always consider this a disadvantage. In a letter to a friend he once wrote that artistic creation was such a great and painful effort that every goad was needed to make a man create, even economic pressure.

The aim which Jonas Lie set to his literary activity was, as we saw, to give to the Norwegian people a poetic reflection of its own life. This, of course, cannot be the work of a single author, and Jonas Lie never imagined it to be. But he has probably contributed more to it than any other man. By the intensity of his vision, by his passionate love of truth, which would not be swerved from the straight path even by his equally passionate patriotism, and by the depth and warmth of his sympathy with everything living, he will always stand as one of the great men of our literature.

CHAPTER XIV

ALEXANDER KIELLAND

BJØRNSON, as we have seen, once pictured Norwegian literature as a fleet sailing to lands across the sea. He remarked that there was no pleasure-yacht among the ships. Even the sharpest and most elegant-looking clipper among them had two shining steel-tubes over the bows, indicating that she was not out for pleasure only. This elegant clipper was Alexander Kielland, the most European of our great writers, but also, and not least by his polemic nature—his " steel-tubes "—profoundly Norwegian.

Alexander Lange Kielland was born at Stavanger on the 18th of February 1849. The family had immigrated from the neighbouring district of Jæren about the middle of the 18th century, and had quickly risen to a leading position in the little town—in fact, it was greatly through the activity of the Kiellands that Stavanger again became a prosperous and important town. Jens Zetlitz Kielland, the author's father, is described as an extremely scrupulous man, who, however, by his social position became in time British vice-consul at Stavanger, bank director, and justice of the peace.

Alexander, with his sisters and brothers, grew up in a large, fine house ; but with an instinct not unusual in children, he seems to have associated mostly with children of the working class, and to have preferred the tales told in the servants' hall to the conversation of the drawing-room. At the age of six years and a half he was sent to the grammar school of the town, where he remained a pupil until his matriculation at the University at the age of eighteen and a half years. His feelings towards the grammar-school education we shall learn when we come to his novel, *Gift* (Poison).

After his matriculation, Alexander Kielland stayed for three or four years at the University, studying Law—the subject that would in the shortest time lead up to a degree. His intermediate as well as his M.L. examinations he passed with indifferent marks only, and left the University in 1871, at the age of a little more than twenty-two. Shortly after his return to Stavanger he bought

a brick-and-tile factory in the neighbourhood, and in the following year he married Beate Ramsland, to whom he had become engaged during his University years. So far there seems to have been no indications that he was to become an author, and one of our greatest.

Not much is known about Kielland's personal development, either during his University years or the period that follows. During his stay in the capital he read much of Heine, and for some time he was under the influence of the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, a man who has been called a second Pascal. Quotations and transcriptions from both of these authors are frequently met with in Kielland's writings—especially he seems to have known by heart great parts of Heine's *Buch der Lieder*. In a letter from later years (1891) he writes of Heine : " I admire him in a manner and to a degree that I have never really confessed to anybody—I believe from a sort of jealousy." And in another letter he says : " I write as it were always under the eye of Søren Kierkegaard." And in another : " Kierkegaard is the author I have loved most of all—and love is a rare word from my pen."

During the years he was a mill-owner we know that Kielland read a great deal of modern literature, fiction and other. He studied Brandes's *Main Currents of 19th Century Literature*—a work that in a comparatively short time revolutionized literary ideas in Norway as well as in Denmark. Among the other works we know he studied were those of Charles Darwin, then recently translated into Danish, some of the books of John William Draper, and the moral and sociological works of John Stuart Mill. Of novelists we know that he read Friedrich Spielhagen, Paul Heyse, and Alphonse Daudet. Already in his schooldays he had read and admired Charles Dickens.

When Kielland for the first time seriously thought of becoming an author, we do not know. But after the middle of the seventies he seems to have felt dissatisfied with his life as a mill-owner, because he felt in him so many tendencies that found no outlet in that occupation. He began to try his hand at writing down short stories, but for a long time nothing seemed to come of it. In the spring of 1878 he told two friends of the plan he had conceived of writing a short play, and on their advice his plan was executed and the play sent to be printed in the monthly *Nyt Tidsskrift*. But before it appeared, Kielland had secretly packed his trunk and left for Paris to study modern French literature and try to clear up his ideas about his own vocation.

Paa Hjemveien (Homewards) was printed in the July number of the review, and made quite a sensation in literary circles, in spite of the season. Dramatically the play is rather weak, but its

style is graceful, witty, and pointed; its subject—business morality —was new, and its ideas utterly modern if not new. It combines very successfully Stuart Mill's views on the woman question with Søren Kierkegaard's insistence on personal responsibility, presented not as abstract ideas but in their working in living characters.

In Paris Kielland stayed for six months, studying with the same eagerness literature and the life led around him. At a state ball given by the French President, MacMahon, in the Palace of Versailles, he for the first time met Bjørnson, who was as charmed by his personality as the reading public soon was to be by his writings. Kielland was—so Bjørnson writes—" the finest-looking man among all the thousands present. Of course, he appeared to me magnified by the place, the pomp, the music; he looked like a revelation of a greater and stronger race. Everybody looked at him; only they could not understand why he did not wear any of his grand crosses, for he must at least be some prince royal from a far snow-country, where the blood of the dynasty was still undiluted. And I confess that I felt proud when he came up to me and spoke Norwegian; it was Alexander Kielland—this favourite of the gods, stepping fully developed into literature, with new subjects and a new style, both in the midst of a halo like that round his own person in the Galerie des Glaces of Versailles."

A few days after this ball Kielland read to Bjørnson some of the stories he had written, and Bjørnson advised him to send them to his own publisher—a thing he never did unless he expected something great of an author. Bjørnson also wrote to the publisher that " that there never was, nor will ever come, anybody like " Kielland. But to the young author himself he was so reserved in his praise that Kielland on his way home was about to throw his manuscript into the Seine, and would have done it had he not thought such a gesture too affected.

When Kielland returned to Norway towards the end of the year—he had stopped for a few weeks in Copenhagen—he had resolved to devote himself exclusively to literature. He set about clearing out his stock of bricks and tiles, and at the same time completed, rewrote, or gave a finishing touch to the stories he had written while abroad. In the spring of the following year, 1879, they were published in Copenhagen, the little volume bearing the title *Novelletter*.

The *Novelletter* at a single stroke made their author famous. Their elegance of style, their exquisite wit, and their well-directed irony were something new in the literatures of Norway and Denmark —for Kielland is read in Denmark quite as much as in his own country. This was the time when the fight between " new " and

" old," between authority and free thought, between conservatism and liberalism, was more central in our literature than ever—it was the year of Ibsen's *Doll's House*. The other authors, like Bjørnson and Ibsen, had fought in their heaviest armour for the liberal ideas, but this new champion defended them with his rapier, as he put it himself, using it with an insinuating grace that enabled him to get into the very stronghold of the enemy. " In the great tumult I have nothing to do. Let us not quarrel about what is greatest—the least is great enough if it be only useful. But I will not conceal that in my opinion a quick, sharp thrust dexterously put may count as much as a swashing blow. Little pricks I shower about in what I write: you will notice them—as I hope, with pleasure. There will soon come more; I have got under way, and it seems to run smoothly."

To begin with, the reading public did not notice very much the " little pricks " wrapped up in the humour and elegance of the stories. Nobody seemed to feel the ground tremble, like the floor in *Balstemning* (A Ball Mood; English title: *Pharaoh*), with the hate of millions. The story which Kielland himself perhaps appreciated most of all is that of the *Two Friends*—one brilliant and witty, but otherwise incapable, the other a most capable man who seems to lack no quality but brilliance and a ready wit; only too late do they see how dependent they are upon each other.

Several critics of the book, while appreciating its extraordinary qualities, were inclined to blame the author for having wasted such excellent subjects by making nothing more than short stories out of them. Kielland himself thought he should never write other things than short stories and plays. At the instigation of his friend Georg Brandes, however, he now tried to compose a longer novel, and succeeded better than he had expected. It did not even take him a very long time to write it—just five months, according to his diary notes.

Garman and Worse (1880) has by Brandes been compared to the first glass of champagne which springs from the bottle; the following ones may be as good, but they are poured out. There is the spontaneity of youth in this work—a novel without a hero, in the same sense as Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*—where the author first presents the scenes and persons so well known to him both from the drawing-room and from the shipyard. Among the characters we mention the old Consul Garman, the " Young Consul " of the House, a somewhat stiff and slow, thoroughly honourable merchant with traditions, a gentleman to his finger-ends, despite the wild oats he has sowed in his youth. Also his brother, the former attaché, a kind and light-hearted fellow, who does not

inquire too deeply into things as long as the world leaves him in peace with the means necessary to enjoy his simple existence. Further, Jacob Worse, who, because of his rash temper, must leave the defence of his advanced ideas to others, and content himself with trying to realize them in his own life. And last, but not least, that perfect actor, Rector Sparre, later bishop, and his two understudies in the patent-felt method, as Kielland calls the rector's way of soothing down and emasculating every new movement and every independent personality. On the whole, the grace of style, the delicate drawing of the characters, the vividness of the situations, the exquisite descriptions of scenery, all combine to make *Garman and Worse* one of the most attractive novels of Norwegian literature. The enthusiasm of the public, and especially of the young, was such as has perhaps hailed no other book in our country. It placed Kielland at once among our greatest authors.

Kielland's productivity during the next years after the publication of *Garman and Worse* was almost marvellous, not only for quantity, but also for quality. In the course of a few years he wrote a whole series of novels, of which several, taken apart, would have been sufficient to place him among the great novelists of the world. In between the novels he found time to write a number of short stories and plays.

The scene of most of the novels is the old-fashioned coast town, that is Kielland's own *Stavanger*, the only place in the world where he felt really at home. The descriptions he in the various books gives of it—in old and new times, seen from the land or from the sea, in good or bad weather, busy or lazy—testify at the same time to his keen observation, his intimate knowledge, his poetic sense, and his warm affection. And his characters from all classes of the population show that his understanding of, and sympathy with, the people was deep and wide enough to embrace everything.

Kielland's second novel, *Arbeidsfolk* (Workers, 1881)—one of the few that have not Stavanger for their scene—is the one where he uses his rapier with most force, if not with the greatest sureness. The object of his indignation is the sluggishness and corruption of the Government officials, who consider themselves the real " workers " of the country. At the same time the book is part of the general attack in those days on the pre-parliamentarian system of government, on the whole policy of the anti-national and anti-democratic Conservative party, and on the functionary class that supported this policy.

More than any other of Kielland's books, *Workers* belongs to the time when it was written, being an attack on one definite system, one definite class, one definite policy. Therefore it was

welcomed by one party as no other book of his, while it met with the unmitigated hatred of another party. It was objected that it was exaggerated, but that was in the author's view no blame. In a letter to his brother, a country dean, he defends himself in the following terms: "When people sleep heavily you do not whisper into their ears: Please get up and look to all your affairs; but you cry: *Fire!* and when they then have rubbed sleep and anger our of their eyes, they will thank you for shouting and making them begin the day's work in time. He who wants to rouse people must exaggerate. . . . Certainly I have exaggerated; I did it consciously, with the force of one-sidedness; that cinnamon-water with sugar and vinegar which they call objective, impartial description, is nonsense and food for babies. . . . Self-denial and courage—excuse me for saying so myself—is required to arrive at the unconcern that makes you throw everything into the flames of your hatred of that which you are profoundly convinced is an evil. Stand off with your eternal peace-making, justice, impartiality, seeing from both sides—and with all this chatter that envelops and blunts the holy indignation! . . . Do you believe that the patent-felt people perform what is just before God? Do not let anybody reproach me with the fury that lends its glow to the whole; for that is my gift, my divine spark, *my* great patent! . . . I feel my forces awakening, and as I am obliged to defend my views, they thereby become so bright and clear that they stand within me like an armoury full of shining, strong weapons."

In the midst of the storm of admiration and abuse raised by *Workers*, Kielland prepared his next broadside, this time with finer shot and surer aim. *Else, A Christmas Story*, appeared towards the end of the same year, 1881. *Workers* had chiefly been an exposure of the corruption of the pillars of society in their public capacities. *Else* is more particularly concerned with their private aspect, with the conventional morality that tolerates such people being honoured, and with fashionable charity that plasters over the ulcers it has not the courage to see nor the moral force to heal.

The pathetic, though wholly unsentimental, story of the orphan Else—whom medical bigotry, distinguished frivolity, charity-ladies (who limit their saving activity to "*fallen* women of the Parish of St. Peter's"), poverty, bad surroundings, and natural weakness let down step by step, until one Christmas night she dies in the lock-up from excessive drinking—was well apt to rouse the readers. The leader of a great revival movement, a man who had no sympathy with Kielland or his Liberal ideas, recommended *Else* in the strongest terms, calling "the attention of

fellow-Christians to the striking, punishing, lashing truths which are here offered us. . . . We must not imagine that we have finished with the author and can shake off his thrashing with the haughty remark that he is said to be a positivist, an atheist, a disbeliever." And Mrs. Schjøtt, in her book on Kielland, tells us that " In Kristiania *Else* created a sensation, and strongly impressed sincere souls and artistic natures. There were people who thought they could not make their Christmas pastries or offer themselves any Christmas amusements, so shaken were they by the book's unmasking of life's seamy sides and by its severe morality, which also, and not least, lashes self-satisfied benefactors."

But such were not the opinions of ordinary church- and society-people. They were indignant at this smuggling of dangerous stuff into the homes of well-minded people under the cover of such an innocent title as *A Christmas Story*. One clergyman, in a widely read Conservative newspaper, characterized the book as poison, and said it ought to have been labelled as such. The same thing had been said of *Workers* by the conservative Professor Lochmann, a man of taste and learning, who in those days was endeavouring to keep out from the country everything in the world of ideas that might be subversive of established authority and established beliefs. Kielland took the hint, and his next novel dealing with contemporary life was accordingly called *Gift* (Poison). But first he paused to write a book on the religious life of an older generation.

Skipper Worse is from one side the story of the good skipper's getting into the firm of Garman, and of his marriage, which in the long-run led to the dissolution of the partnership, though not in Worse's own lifetime. But in its principal aspect it is an attempt to show the influence of " Haugianism " on the Norwegian people, and as such it gives one of the best pictures of Norwegian religious life and religious personalities that is to be found in our literature.

Haugianism is the religious movement originated towards the end of the 18th century by Hans Nielsen Hauge, the greatest religious personality of Norwegian history. This remarkable man was the son of a peasant, and born in 1771. In his youth, and much later too, most of the Norwegian clergy were, to use Kielland's words in a note to the German edition of *Skipper Worse*, " dry Rationalists, unable to satisfy the religious craving of the people, whom they did not understand, and whose inferior culture they despised." About the age of twenty Hauge was converted, and soon began travelling about in the country to preach, and by his conversation and religious meetings he in a few years aroused a lively religious interest and activity among the people. " The

peasants"—we quote Kielland again—"left off fighting and drinking and went about their work. Soon there was a great movement, with numerous centres all around in the extensive country, centres where factories and industrial enterprises grew forth under busy hands, while workers and employers in brotherly love gathered around the Word of God.

"That the people thus helped themselves both spiritually and temporally was what the functionary class could not bear. The pulpit received the willing aid of the bar, and by means of an old Order in Council from 1741 they effected that Hauge was arrested and imprisoned. For ten years they kept him in prison. But as everything that was brought to light by the innumerable inquiries only were new testimonials of the man's spotless life, great talents, and noble character, his enemies at last had to let him go, contenting themselves with depriving him of the rest of his fortune.

"The victory was theirs, however. For Hauge was physically broken by the many years of unhealthy prison life; he lived only a few years after his release—sick and suffering, but brave and cheerful to the last. He died in 1824. But not until 1842 did the people's representatives succeed in abolishing the old Order from 1741—in spite of the resistance of King, Cabinet, county sheriffs, University, bishops, deans, and priests." It has rarely been the privilege of a nation to exhibit the relation between State and Religion in a crueller light. After Hauge's death the movement, both its religious and its practical sides, was kept up by his friends and their descendants, and was one of the principal factors in the education of the Norwegian people for political self-government.

The portrait which Kielland in *Skipper Worse* paints of the most notable representative of the Haugians in the coast town, is among the finest and most sympathetic in all his production. His understanding of the religious mind forced the recognition even of the Church people. Professor Lochmann himself, who had found *Workers* so poisonous, proclaimed *Skipper Worse* an excellent work, to be placed between the history of the National Church and Tidemand's paintings as a faithful picture of Christian life in Norway.

After *Skipper Worse*, which is generally considered the author's most important work, Kielland again returned to contemporary life and problems. In *Poison* (1883), *Fortuna* (1884), and *Sankt Hans Fest* (Midsummer Festival, 1887) we meet with different aspects of present-day life in the coast town. The characters of the three novels are to a great extent the same, time only has altered the circumstances from volume to volume. In one respect

the three may be considered the story of Abraham Løvdahl, son of Professor Løvdahl. *Poison* shows how the intelligent and brave and sympathetic boy has his natural instincts and interests stifled by book-dust in the grammar school, cowed by an unintelligent discipline, and perverted by the hypocrisy implied in the Church confirmation. In *Fortuna* the work so well begun is continued: a marriage of mixed convenience and romance makes him give up the study he was really interested in, and the whirlpool of business life soon crushes out of him what independence there was left, until at last he goes to church to show off his humility and thereby obtain some favour of the people he had helped to ruin. In *Sankt Hans Fest* he is reduced to write, under the orders of his former school-fellow, who has now become a very influential priest, against his own opinion and his own friends.

Poison is above all a novel of education, and an attack upon the cramming of children with Latin and Greek and other dead matter. The keynote is struck in a prose poem to learning, a poem of the owls that haunt the Gothic windows of the cathedral, and that for the last six hundred years have flown to and fro between it and the convent garden, where the pale mediæval monk sat rubbing his front against an obscure passage in Tacitus, and where the present headmaster of the grammar school is still poring over it. In spite of its violent attack on school and on Church confirmation, *Poison* is a book full of the most genial humour. Its stories from school life are still a favourite reading both with old and young.

Fortuna is the story of a chemical factory of that name, from its start to its ruin in a whirlpool of bills of exchange; its chief subject is the business morality, especially of the upstarts in business. It may be interesting to note that in the same year Jonas Lie also published a novel with the same subject, *En Malstrøm* (A Whirlpool).

In the following two years Kielland was somewhat distracted from his literary work by being one of the foci of political life in Norway. When the Liberal party came into office in 1884, one of the first things literary Liberals thought of was to obtain a Poet's Stipend for Kielland. In the spring of 1885 Bjørnson and Jonas Lie sent in an application to the Storting that a yearly stipend, similar to that granted to themselves and to Ibsen, be granted also to Kielland. They pointed out that it would be, not only a merited honour and a material help to him, but an act of simple justice, as Norwegian authors had no protection for their literary property abroad, owing to Norway's non-adhesion to the international copyright conventions. But the Kielland question, as it

was called, laid bare a profound cleft in the victorious Liberal party: on one side were the Liberals in the European sense of the word, on the other the peasants, whose main object was to break the power of the functionaries, their old enemies. Most of these latter people were not Liberal at all in intellectual matters, and especially they dreaded everything that might savour of religious liberalism. There now began a searching of reins and hearts to find out Kielland's personal religious standpoint, a searching that was most painful to its subject. The Salary and Stipend Committee of the Storting concluded its report by a refusal of the grant, finding it invidious for the State " to support and stamp with its recognition a literary activity which in any case to some extent is supposed to be in opposition to the moral and religious conceptions prevalent within the nation." The Storting gave its assent to the conclusions of the Committee report.

The application was renewed next year, and again rejected. For two years, however, Kielland was granted the same sum as a compensation for his loss by the want of copyright protection. This compensation was taken from him after two years, and then Bjørnson renounced his own stipend as a protest, until a new Government appointed Kielland to an office. The majority that had voted against Kielland's stipend on all occasions was composed of the Conservative party and of what was thenceforward known as the Moderate party. Trifling as the Kielland case may seem, it proved to be the touchstone on which the strong party of the Left split.

The decisive factor in the divisions over Kielland's stipend was the Church people and interests, and they are the subject of his next book, the novel *Sne* (Snow, November 1886). The two principal characters of the story are the Rev. Daniel Jürges and his prospective daughter-in-law, Gabriele Pram. The Rev. Jürges is one of those clergymen—and they were numerous in Norway about this time—to whom Conservatism and Christianity are two words meaning practically the same thing. Personally he is in many respects an able and sympathetic man, but authoritative and unconsciously tyrannic, and utterly unable to believe in the sincerity of people who do not agree with his fundamental principles. Perhaps it is only a consequence of some of the current Church doctrines if he thinks that whoever does not accept as infallible the teaching of the Church, is impelled by a spirit of hostility to truth and goodness.

Opposite the Rev. Jürges stands Gabriele Pram, a young and strong intellectual woman, who has received a modern education, and who refuses to be treated by her fiancé and his father as a

misguided child and an object for their missionary efforts. She claims for her considered opinions the same regard as she is willing to give to theirs, and what is almost worse, that they shall prove the sincerity of their belief by living up to the injunctions of their professed Master. When they will not, or cannot, understand her, she breaks off her engagement and leaves the house, courageously starting on her own way through the snow—the snow that symbolizes the secular layer of beliefs and doctrines and prejudice that covers the country, a beautiful and poetic cover, to be sure, but cold and barren, hiding the roads from sight and preventing the flowers from springing.

The young girl is so much a speaking-trumpet for the author's own opinions that it detracts from our interest in her as a character. More interesting in this respect is her fiancé, a hesitating young theologian, who is torn between the stronger characters of his father and of his fiancée. Most interesting of all perhaps is the young man's mother, whose soul has been smothered as it were under the authority of her husband and his creed, until she is afraid even of the echo of the days when she still took an interest of her own in life.

Practically all the arguments in *Snow* used against the Church and the Church people are drawn, either from the Bible or from Søren Kierkegaard, the greatest Christian philosopher of the 19th century.

One morning in the early autumn of 1887 Kielland, who was then living at Cernay-la-Ville, near Paris, was, to use his own expression, seized with a divine rage. One of the characters from *Poison* and *Fortuna*, the stout and greedy and vulgar clergyman Morten Kruse, nicknamed Morten Bagstræver ("Backwards"), took on the shape of the Vestland leader of the Low-Church or so-called Moderate party, and Kielland's old enemy. At the same time the idea of a popular midsummer festival, which was to be wrecked by the obscurantist meeting-house people, came to him. He set about combining the two ideas, the necessary story came readily to him, and in two months' time he had written and re-written the novel *Sankt Hans Fest*, which appeared towards the end of November 1887.

The novel, when it appeared, was mainly seen as a political and personal pamphlet against the priest-politician in question, but that aspect of it is now getting more into the background. As it stands it is a masterly exposure of the passion of domination in a person sufficiently stupid and unconscious to take his own cravings for power and riches for the promptings of God within him. It also shows the facility with which such a person may

impose himself on the general public which is willing to " bow and adore " as soon as anybody or anything is presented with claims of divine authority. *Sankt Hans Fest* is sure to retain its interest as long as such phenomena are still possible in our society.

Between his greater novels Kielland also wrote and published a series of short stories and short plays. Already in the same year as *Garman and Worse* (1880) Kielland published one volume of plays, *For Scenen* (For the Stage), and one volume of *Nye Novelletter* (New Novelettes). The first contains three short plays — *Homewards*, of which we have already spoken, *His Majesty's Sheriff* (in two acts), and *It is All Nothing* (one act). His Majesty's Sheriff is a man with a passion and a talent for joinery and cabinet-making, but with neither passion nor talent for " sheriffing," and who, in spite of the disgrace to the functionary class, gives up his sheriffship and takes to manual work. The play is interesting for its amusing scenes, for its well-directed attack on class prejudice, and from the circumstance that its principal character has the author's own father for its model.

It is All Nothing is a variation, but a quite original one, on the theme of Alfred de Musset's proverbe, *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*. The man of Kielland's play has squandered his love and his belief in life in a series of frivolous experiments, acted and imagined, and has no longer the force to take life seriously, so that his cousin, who has loved him all the time, refuses him when he comes to offer what is left of himself. Kielland calls this play his " little favourite play." Trifling as it seems it has a deep undertone of sadness in the seemingly light duets of quotations from Heine and Holger Drachmann. " The two cousins are past their youth and what belongs to youth—in one the feeling itself is cracked, the other has learned to subdue its expression. The buoyancy and youthful courage they have lost; to the accompaniment of Chopin's music they commit the hopes of their youth to earth," writes the Danish author and critic Herman Bang.

The *New Novelettes* contain some of Kielland's wittiest and most graceful stories. We mention—with their English titles [1]— *The Peat Moor*, the bitter reflections of an old raven who, after a long absence, returns to the haunts of his youth to fetch an old pig's ear which he had hid long ago. Everything has changed since his youth, and like other old people the raven finds the changes abominable. One thing has resisted time, however: the credulity and superstition of the people.—*Siesta* is a description of a very much mixed dinner-party, where an Irish pianist plays

[1] Translated partly by William Archer in *Tales of Two Countries*, partly by R. L. Cassie in *Norse Tales and Sketches*.

an improvisation on Poverty with such effect that it spoils for a day the old gourmand's digestion and the old coquette's interest in flirtation, and gives the whole company an uncanny feeling of living on a sleeping volcano of human need.—*The Parsonage,* one of Kielland's very finest stories, shows, without the slightest touch of sentimentality or direct moralizing, how ignorance and inexperience may, in a moment of frivolous flirtation, destroy the whole life of a young girl. The whole thing is so light and gay and charming, and all the same leaves one with a pang at heart for the tragic destiny of the parson's daughter.

In the next year, after *Skipper Worse,* Kielland published a tiny volume containing *Two Novelettes from Denmark.* One is the story of *Trofast,* a dog in Copenhagen ; the author's sympathy is not with dog, but with man—a fact so rare in literature as to deserve notice. We quote some of the reflections on the things man and dog have taught each other :

" First of all man has taught the dog to fawn. Next the dog has acquired all the qualities that make man base and unreliable : crawling flattery upwards, brutality and disdain downwards ; the narrowest attachment to what is your own, and mistrust and hostility to everything else. Yes, the noble animal has been docile even to acquiring the purely human art of judging people by their clothes : well-dressed people it leaves in peace, but makes straight for the legs of ragged ones.

" Man has learnt from the dog to appreciate prostrate, undeserved worship. When neither injustice nor ill-usage ever meets with anything but the eternally wagging tail, crawling belly, and licking tongue, the result will be that the master thinks himself a splendid fellow who by right is the object of all this affection. And, transferring his experience from the dog to his human companions, he puts less restraint upon himself — expecting to meet with wagging tails and licking tongues. And if then he is disappointed, he despises man and turns with loud praise to the dog."

The other novelette from Denmark, *Karen,* is the simple story of a barmaid who loves the gallant-looking post-guard. When she happens to learn that he is married, she runs out upon the heath, where a splash in a deep turf trench frightens away a hare, thus depriving the crouching fox of his legitimate evening meal. We can follow all the details of the tragic dénouement although none of them is told, only hinted at.

Between *Snow* and *Midsummer Festival* Kielland wrote two comedies—*Three Couples* (three acts, 1886), and *Betty's Guardian* (four acts, 1887). The subject of *Three Couples* is the dullness and triviality that so often will come into the lives of married

people living too exclusively with each other. The two married couples—the third are people on the look out for a marriage—take to flirtation with other men and women as a diversion from the matrimonial monotony. After many complications, which are several times rather dangerous, everybody at last returns safe and sound to his or her lawful spouse, and is happy and relieved to do so. The clever girl, to whom is largely due this good result, is rewarded by getting the husband she has been angling for all the time.

Not quite so harmless is the next play, whose fable is that of the heiress and her guardian. Throughout *Betty's Guardian* Kielland has strewn a lot of his most malicious pricks, aimed chiefly at the opportunist Liberals and at those modern women who were about to forget, in the midst of their talk of woman's independence, that woman is first of all human and next woman, and that in both these capacities she is no more independent of man than he is of her. The emancipationists had been enthusiastic about Kielland's pictures of "modern women" in former books, in *Homewards*, in *His Majesty's Sheriff*, in *Garman and Worse*, and elsewhere. But now that he made the necessary reservations they cried out that he had betrayed modern woman.

In the next year, 1888, Kielland wrote his last play, the four-act comedy, *The Professor*. The subject is again the fight between the new and the old time, just as in the novel *Snow*. But in the play the fighting-ground is no longer the Church, but the University. The fight becomes so bitter that the old professor does not hesitate to sacrifice, or, failing that, to besmirch, the honour of his own innocent daughter, if he can only hit his adversary, who is the man she loves. The curtain falls before we learn whether there is anybody who will believe in his devilish calumny.

In letters from this time, the end of the eighties, Kielland complains that the inventions no longer come readily and willingly to him as before. His next book after *The Professor* did not appear till two and a half years later, in 1891. It is the great novel *Jacob*, so called because its hero has for his ideal, if such a word may be applied to such a man, the patriarch Jacob, and that because Jacob was so lucky at cheating. Our hero, the young peasant Tørres Wold, is also lucky at cheating, so lucky, indeed, that he finally becomes the mightiest man of the town and is sent to represent it in Parliament. And he sees no reason not to go on in the same way there. "One morning, when the House and gallery were full, he rose during the debate on some school question, and said that . . . he was happy to confess in this House that he had got no further—no, truly he had not!—he had got no

further than to the humble ground of his childhood faith, and he prayed to God that he would never get any further.

"His speech attracted attention. . . . But what made the greatest sensation was the announcement . . . that Mr. T. Wold, M.P., Company and Bank Director, was to be made a Knight of the Order of St. Olav at the next Court." It struck people and " they began to think. Was it not useless to themselves and an injustice to the children to teach them this honesty which was supposed to be the best policy? For it was not at all true. And was it not to deprive their children of a chance in life, . . . to hide from them that the upward road in society was prepared for shameless covetousness and brazen-faced hypocrisy."

Jacob is a very bitter, but also a healthy book, unveiling as it does the meanness both of the lucky cheater and of the moral jelly-fishes who end by accepting everything from such a man. Unfortunately the author has made the rise of his hero too rapid to be quite credible, and that detracts somewhat from the value of the work.

In the same year, 1891, Kielland published a volume of short sketches, essays, and stories with the title of *Mennesker og Dyr* (Folk and Animals). They are chiefly the witty, spiritual remarks of a keen and trained observer, but few of them attain the grace and the force of his earlier novelettes. Only some of the descriptions of scenery can be compared to his former things. Kielland himself had a feeling of that, and so he put a stop, a real *punctum finale* to his authorship. To the astonishment of everybody, he applied for and was appointed to the burgomastership of his native town. He never more returned to literature, except with an historical work on *Napoleon's Men and Methods* (1905), a most fascinating study, which, however, hardly belongs to *belles-lettres*.

Alexander Kielland died in 1906; he had then for some years been county sheriff of Romsdal, on the north-west coast. After his death no fewer than four volumes of letters from him have been published. He there reveals himself as the finest letter-writer of our literature, and as a most charming man, and a good friend and father. His letters also form an important contribution to the literary history of his time.

Kielland's literary career was short, but brilliant—in fact, more brilliant than that of any other Norwegian author. His principal qualities as a writer are the natural elegance and perfect limpidity of his style, his keen observation and his mastery of the details observed so as to make them serve the purpose he has in mind, and his genial humour which pervades everything he has

written, even his most militant books. All those qualities are perhaps best seen in some pages of nature description which are distributed through most of his works. One of those pages, whose subject is the flight of the birds of passage from the Nile to the North, Kielland himself considered his chief "title of admission to immortality." But we think he has even better titles of admission: his pity for life's step-children, his warm sympathy with whatever is striving for a fuller and richer life, and, above all, the invigorating air of moral honesty and cleanness and truthfulness which one always breathes in his company.

CHAPTER XV

ARNE GARBORG

IN the opening chapter of *Peace,* Garborg has painted the country where he was born and where he passed his childhood and early youth in the following terms :

" Outside in the west the sea breaks in upon a low, sandy beach of forty miles or more.

" It is the sea itself, the North Sea broad and free, unbroken and unbent, endless. Black-green and briny it comes rolling in mighty waves from the Northern Ice and the English Channel, driving its white-maned horses of breakers forth from the ocean fog till they froth with rage, while it roars its deep, eternal organ note from the utmost abysses. Then it throws itself against the shore and is shattered into a white foam, with bumps and thumps and long, thundering crashes, dying at last in a dull boom.

" Up from the low, sandy beach there stretches a poor, greyish land, with heather-brown hills and pale moors, strewn with mighty boulders, treeless and bare, barred towards the east by a long row of low ridges. Endless the naked heath seems to be. But here and there it is enlivened by the blue of a solitary tarn growing over with weeds, or by a great, still lake. Here the wind is soughing by day and by night. And the grey mist hangs low over the moor, where the hare flees from boulder to boulder, and all sorts of brown and speckled wild fowl lie in their hidden nests, winking and dozing.

" Spanning over the whole of it, from the mountain line to the ocean, wherever you look, is the wide, grey sky—the only light of existence. You have it before your eyes wherever you go. Nearly always it is full of clouds and storm. Now and then it sinks to earth, wrapping the land in mist and rain as in a blanket. And it rains and rains till the land is flooded.

" Here and there on the hills and slopes low houses huddle together, as if seeking shelter. In the misty air they half disappear as if by a spell, or wrap themselves in peat smoke and sea fog as in a dream ; closed and still they lie along the waste like elfish abodes. Around the houses you may discern pale green patches

of meadow and cornfield like islets in the vast heath; every bit and corner is enclosed and girdled with long dykes of stone.

"In such homes do the people live.

"They are a strong, heavy people, working their way through life by pondering and labour, delving the earth and searching the Scriptures, tormenting the sand until it yields grain and their dreams until they yield hope, putting their faith in the penny and their trust in God."

The part of Norway thus described is *Jæren*, on the south-west coast. Here ARNE GARBORG was born, in the parish of Timë, on the 25th of January 1851. His father was a comparatively well-to-do farmer, who had before been a teacher in the ambulatory parish school, and thus was better instructed than most people of his class. Arne was his first child and heir apparent to the family farm, and his early childhood seems to have been very happy, welcome as he was everywhere. But when he was about eight years old, his father went through a religious crisis, which made him an intolerant pietist and cast a shadow on his home and on all his future life. The children were not permitted to go to school, because they would then be contaminated with the frivolity of the worldly children. His old books he hid away, forbidding all in the house to touch them.

In spite of his father's injunction Arne soon found the forbidden books and managed to read them. He even got into touch with a circulating library, and kept the books at the bottom of a large chest underneath clothes and linen. The chest stood in the attic, and there the boy would spend hours in the cold, kneeling before the open chest with his prohibited book, ready to drop it at the slightest suspicious sound. When at the age of twelve or thirteen he was permitted to return to school, his teachers were astonished at his extensive reading.

At the age of sixteen, Arne, with his father's consent, went to a six months' course of preparation for teaching in the ambulatory school, and at the end of the course was appointed a teacher. His father had consented, mainly that his son might be exempted from the military service, which was then, and with much reason, regarded by the peasants as a slavery and a torture. But when, after a year of teaching, Arne announced that he wanted to go to a training college in order to take up teaching for good, it was a heavy blow to his father, who had expected him to take over the farm after him. But Arne, in spite of the pain he felt in hurting his father's feelings, was firm in his resolve, and went. His father little by little understood that the other children also pined to leave home. He was overcome with grief at the thought of leaving

the old family farm to strangers, partly because he attributed to himself the children's want of care for it; and so he sought death in a neighbouring lake. This news reached Arne while at the training college. For some time he was totally upset by it, but thanks to his youth, his work, and his violin he was saved from despair, although the event left its mark on his soul for ever.

After a two years' course at the training college, Arne Garborg got a situation as a teacher in the common school of a little town on the south-east coast. But he soon gave up teaching and took to journalism, starting first a paper for teachers, then also a local paper in another little town. In his two papers he wrote articles on every question of the day, political, literary, and religious. He also wrote a number of poems, most of which more clearly show influence from Henrik Ibsen than originality in their author. Besides the writing, which he did almost alone, Garborg also helped his co-editor with the composing and printing of the papers.

But he soon had enough of provincial journalism. In 1873 he sold his share in the printing office and the papers to his partner for the sum of five dollars, and with that sum in his pocket he started for the capital, to study or to die, as he said.

In Kristiania, Garborg began to prepare for the University matriculation at the " Student Factory " founded by old Heltberg —who was now dead, so that the school was in other hands. To make his living the while, Garborg wrote articles for different Liberal papers. He also wrote and published anonymously a critical essay on Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean,* which had then just been published. The essay attracted considerable notice, it was indeed so much in demand that a second edition had to be printed—a success hitherto shared by no other book of literary criticism in Norwegian literature. Garborg's point of view was that of the Christian moralist as well as of the æstheticist. His exposition of his views was remarkably well-ordered, and his style clear and agreeable. When at last it became known that the author was a young man about to pass his *Examen Artium,* it raised the greatest expectations. When the King learnt about it, he sent for the young author in order to offer him some help to go on with his studies; but Garborg was so jealous of his complete independence that he thought it best to decline the offer.

After matriculation, which he passed with excellent marks, Garborg got a situation on the staff of *Aftenbladet,* the greatest Liberal paper. Among the articles he wrote for this paper—and he wrote a great number, on very different subjects—we only mention some written in defence of the University authorities who had refused to lend a hall for some lectures by Georg Brandes,

because Brandes in his writings had attacked orthodox Christianity and conventional morality. Garborg's point was that the University as a public institution was not only entitled but morally bound to close its doors to adversaries of the religion and morals recognized by the State. To the objection that the University was only an institute for scientific research and teaching, Garborg replied that its task also included the moral education of its students, and thus it ought not to admit any person whose influence was regarded as pernicious by the community. No one should have thought that the man who forwarded such arguments was soon to become the most intrepid champion of absolute liberty of research and of discussion in moral and religious as well as in scientific questions.

Another discussion in which Garborg at this time took a part was that of the Language Question. Ivar Aasen's followers, the *maalmenn*, were now becoming so numerous that they had to be counted with, although their greatest author, Vinje, was dead. They were the object of several attacks in the press; Garborg took up their defence, first in his paper, then in a volume called *The New Norwegian Language and Nationality Movement: An Attempt at a Comprehensive Statement, in the Form of Polemic Addresses to Its Opponents* (1877). We cannot go into the question here, except to state that Garborg's book is still the most comprehensive account of the movement, its aims and premises, and that the *maalmenn* still go to it for weapons in the standing fight between the two languages. The book immediately involved its author in a number of controversies, carried on both in the periodical press and in separate pamphlets.

From this time Garborg was the recognized political leader of the Landsmaal movement. Already in the previous year, 1876, he had been elected president of *Det Norske Samlaget*, a literary society formed in 1868 for the propagation of the New Norse as a literary language. Up to this time, however, he had himself only written in Dano-Norwegian. But now he resolved to write in the language whose champion he had constituted himself, and from the autumn of 1877 he started a paper in it. In politics the new paper, *Fedraheimen* (Our Ancestral Home, A Weekly Paper for the Norwegian People), was radical and democratic, in religious questions orthodox, but tolerant; in literature it defended the beginning realism of Ibsen and Bjørnson, without associating itself with any particular doctrine.

Besides his articles on every question of the day, Garborg soon began to publish in his paper short poems and stories, all in New Norse. The poems show a keen sense for the music of the language,

and a great mastery of form. The stories are mostly peasant novelettes, somewhat in the manner of Bjørnson, though the general tone is more sombre and the pictures more realistic. Most of them, however, do not betray any great originality, although they clearly indicate talent in their author.

Garborg in these years went through a rapid evolution. He was of a thoroughly religious nature, and always thought much about religious matters. When he began writing he was entirely orthodox in his views, but he soon was dissatisfied with the intolerance shown by the Church people towards all men of different opinion. In his first longer novel, published as a feuilleton in *Fedraheimen*, he vindicates the morality as well as the sincerity of the free-thinkers — even announces his intention by calling his book *Ein Fritenkjar* (A Freethinker). Not that Garborg considered himself one of them at that time, although he more and more sympathized with them. The hero of the novel is a young theologian whose studies have led him to reject revealed religion. He falls in love with the daughter of a parson, and in spite of his own reason and the remonstrances of a friend, he asks her to marry him. In vain his friend repeats to him that " a man in this country who has not the right belief must put up with being homeless. He is an outlaw of society and has not the right to drag anybody with him. But to marry the daughter of a clergyman would be to get all the hatred and anger and heresy-hunting into one's own house. It would be making all one's life into one harrowing disharmony. Everything you love, she will have to hate and fear ; everything she loves, is to you lies. You mean to convert her ? Poor boy ! You may teach a sheep to walk on two legs and a bear to dance a reel ; but teach a Norwegian woman to think—never ! "

Our friend tries, however—and she, too, of course, tries to convert him, with the result that she leaves him, taking their child with her. The husband leaves the country, and does not return until he is an old man. He then finds his son a clergyman, like his maternal grandfather, and no understanding between them is possible. The old man dies from grief, and on his grave his son delivers a thundering sermon against the abominations of freethinking.

As an account of the opinions prevalent among the Norwegian Church people, both clergy and laymen, *A Freethinker* will always be a valuable document of the time. But as a psychological analysis it is rather thin. The characters are types, not individuals —and sometimes they are not much more than the author's speaking-trumpets. As Georg Brandes has said, the book is less a

narrative than a lyrical hymn to religious liberty and an indignant denunciation of intolerance.

Garborg about this time, or a little earlier, had become a junior clerk on the Audit Commission, partly as a reward for the political services he had rendered to the Liberal party. Some time after the publication of *A Freethinker*, he applied to the Storting for a grant to be able to occupy himself exclusively with his literary work. But although many would have liked to give the grant, the majority were afraid of the Church people if they were to help in any way a man who upheld the character of the free-thinkers. The result was that Garborg got nothing. Fortunately, he soon got so much pay on the Audit Commission that he need not rely on journalism for his living.

Meanwhile Garborg had found time to write the greater part of his next novel, *Bondestudentar* (Peasant Students), which appeared in 1883. Its subject is the cultural division of the Norwegian people, and its object to show the dangers of transition from one to the other of the two cultures, or, otherwise put, to warn the country people against giving up their own. The central figure of the book is Daniel Braut, a peasant's son, who makes the transition and comes out a gentleman *minus* his manhood.

The opening chapter introduces us to a peasant family at their daily morning worship. The theme this morning is that of confidence in God who " giveth unto His people both clothing and food even while they are sweetly sleeping."

" Little Daniel, a boy of thirteen, liked well both the hymn and the reading, and only wished the people would conform to it in their lives. But when the prayer was said, and Ole Johannes ordered both Elias, his eldest son, and Reinert, the servant, and Daniel, to come out with him into the damp and cold weather to begin the field works of the spring—ugh ! then Daniel could not help thinking that this was a strange way of conforming to God's word."

Daniel's father is a well-to-do peasant with four children, of which Daniel is the youngest and the most intelligent—he reads so well, as the peasants put it. More is not needed to make Daniel ambitious, so that he dreams of a life among the functionaries, although he considers them almost superhuman beings : " The most brilliant and noble thing of all, in his opinion, was this glittering tower, as it were, of might and splendour, which rose in the land, from bailiff and schoolmaster, through priest and sheriff and district judge, ever higher and more splendid, up to the King, who stood on the very summit dressed in pure gold. Those who belonged to this towering construction were great and

mighty and distinguished and clever; but those who were not admitted into it, they were like the children of Israel when they were in Egypt making bricks for King Pharaoh. The mere sight of such royal servants in all their splendour was to Daniel a solemn feast. . . . And how humble the peasants were as soon as these great men showed themselves, and how did not even the mightiest peasant stoop and dwindle if he had only to speak to one of their office-boys! . . . The older Daniel became, the more he thought to himself that he must get away from the slavery and the wooden shoes and the breeches of homespun with patches of leather behind and on the knees; he must get out from the low, dark, peasant hut, and away from those peasants who sat there saying evil things of each other and sour things to each other in a horrible language and a suffocating air; but first of all he must get away from work. Oh, if he were only grown up!"

And his hope, or rather his dream, of once forming part of this magnificent construction is realized—the novel is the story of the way in which it is done. We follow Daniel to the romantic curate, who is proud of his discovery of this "child of nature," and goes about teaching him wisdom for life, as he calls his "method." Next, Daniel comes to the grammar school of the nearest town, where there is no talk of "spirit," only of lessons. But this way to learning soon proves too long and expensive for the means of Daniel's father and other relatives, who are all made to contribute. Daniel goes to the "Student Factory," and we now get an interesting picture from the life at this curious school. And from there we follow him to the University, and through the "ideal student's life"—corresponding practically to the "sowing of wild oats" with, if necessary, starving rather than doing philistine work for money—until he at last becomes engaged to the daughter of a wealthy peasant, who is willing to pay for Daniel's studies in order to have his daughter married.

Bondestudentar is the most important document in our literature for the study of a certain phase of our national history. With a realism that at times is brutal, but which must act on every healthy mind as a moral tonic, it paints the life led by a whole generation of peasant students, at the time when most of the men who have been our leaders in politics, in literature, in science for the last thirty years or so, were young and impressionable. *Bondestudentar* introduces us to all the different circles of freethinking radicals, or of pietists of every degree of sincerity and bigotry, or of romantic Grundtvigians, where the future leaders received their education for good as well as for bad. The book is a lashing satire on every form of flight from life's realities, be it by romantic dreaming or by

religious or social hypocrisy, or by any other of the innumerable means invented by a prolific moral indolence. If peasant students now better than before are able to avoid the pitfalls where so many of the first generation of them came to ruin, it is certainly to a great extent due to Garborg's outspoken warnings in this book and others.

From a purely literary point of view, several criticisms of *Bondestudentar* may be justified. Its paintings are often too broad, its discussions too long and too numerous, and some of the reflections of the author too intelligent for the person who is credited with their expression. These objections may almost be summed up in one : the book is too crammed. The author has so much to say that he cannot find suitable room for it. In spite of its faults, however, *Bondestudentar* is not only instructive reading, necessary to the student of Norwegian society, but also very captivating reading to any student of human life.

Garborg's next book was a volume of *Ferteljingar og Sogur* (Stories and Tales, 1884). Most of these had been published before in *Fedrahcimen*, though several had been rewritten for the volume edition. Only one of the stories is completely new, the one called *Ungdom* (Youth). It is a very irreverent contribution to the discussion raised by Bjørnson's *Gauntlet*, where Bjørnson put the same demands for chastity to men as to women.

The hero of *Youth* is a young graduate in forestry, Jens Carlstad, a man of the very best principles and engaged to a young lady of his own class, Miss Jenny. But during a stay in the country he is tempted beyond his forces by Mary Ann, a pretty peasant girl. He is seized with remorse, reproaches himself abundantly, but the thought of the gay and pretty girl thrills him against his will—and he falls again and again. But he is fond of his fiancée too, " and has the greatest esteem for her. She was an intellectual woman ; distinguished, pale, interesting ; a good education, piano, German, English, French, and a sense for art, for poetry, and for nature," while the little peasant wench is nothing but senses and laughter. He is scandalized that Mary Ann has not as bad a conscience as himself, although she is, if not formally engaged, at least intended to be the wife of Per Tjerandson. And so Jens Carlstad sermonizes the partner of his guilt until she boxes his ears. Although deeply offended in his dignity, he is soon reconciled, and they are friends again until he recommences the preaching —with the same result as before. About this time he receives from his fiancée Bjørnson's *Gauntlet*, with a letter requesting him to confess all his past to her. He returns it with the same request —and she replies by breaking off the engagement. Of the future of these persons we learn that " they are now married or engaged,

all of them. Jenny is betrothed to a bachelor of thirty-eight who swears that she is his first love ; perhaps it is true—to judge by his looks, you may believe anything of him. Jens is going to marry a young widow, who has both conscience and morals, and several thousand pounds in money. But Mary Ann is married to Per Tjerandson."

The discussion raised by Bjørnson's book had just begun when Garborg published his *Stories and Tales*. It continued for several years, but the most heated part of it came only in the second or third year, after the publication of Hans Jæger's *Fra Kristiania-Bohèmen* (From the Kristiania Bohemia). This book, too, claimed the same morality for men and women, but thought the best means of realizing it would be by free love. Jæger's book was a most naturalistic exposure of the present system, where marriage seems to have for its inevitable reverse, prostitution. The book was confiscated by the police, and most well-minded people seemed to agree with the Government in this measure. Of the authors who had a name to risk, only Jonas Lie and Garborg took up the defence of the poor author. Not that they agreed with him or found much artistic value in his work, but, to quote Jonas Lie, because " it is a cry of distress—a cry from the deepest and most horrible distress of life, a shriek of terror from a man about to sink. . . . It is a terrible book, written by a man with the revolver pointed at his head."

Garborg thought this the moment to get up a serious discussion of the whole question, and was indignant at seeing it stifled by the police. He had almost finished a book on a similar subject when Jæger's appeared, and now he rewrote it and made it much cruder than before, in order to have it confiscated too ; for thus he hoped to force people into a discussion. But he did not succeed. The Government refused to confiscate *Menfolk* (1886), and most of the people he had hoped to tease out of their passivity, remained silent as before.

As a work of art, *Menfolk* is a considerable advance on Garborg's earlier novels. It is better proportioned, its style is firmer and more pointed, its psychology deeper, and its characterization clearer. Its subject, the private life of undergraduates, artists, journalists, and other homeless people of the rapidly growing capital, makes an analysis difficult. Its thesis, in so far as a purely descriptive work can be said to have any, is that mutual love is the sole and sufficient moral foundation for sexual relations, and that marriage in this respect is of no account.

But the thesis and the way in which it was expounded was more than the pillars of society could endure from a man who

lived on public money. Garborg had, in 1883, been elected Audit Commissioner, and soon proved to be one of the ablest and hardest-working Commissioners there had ever been. His work gave him an economic independence, which he availed himself of to fight for his moral and religious ideas in the way we have seen. But the powers that were did not favour his uncalled-for zeal, and took his work from him. At the next election of Commissioners, which took place in 1887, the year after the publication of *Menfolk*, Garborg was not re-elected—there was a majority of seven votes against him. In his years of prosperity he had bought a small mountain farm, *Kolbotn*, in the north of Østerdalen. He now went to stay there, far away from people, in order to work in peace—and to live more cheaply than he could in the capital. But first he married. His wife, HULDA GARBORG, was later to acquire a name for herself as an authoress and as a resuscitator of our national song-dances.

If Garborg had lost his income, he had also got rid of his non-literary work, and was free to occupy himself with writing, until he again should be obliged to make some money. During his first year at Kolbotn, he published three books—one four-act play, and two small volumes of polemics.

The play, *Irreconcilables* (1888), deals with Norwegian politics and politicians at the time when it was written. Its subject is the political corruption which inevitably follows upon the desertion of principles on the part of the leaders. Even the most Irreconcilable are brought to "reason" if you will only pay their price. Owing to the actuality of the subject and the models of the play, none of the Norwegian theatres dared perform it, although they recognized its dramatic qualities, and although it was written in Dano-Norwegian—then and much later the only language spoken from the stages of Norway. It was played some years later in Berlin, with considerable success. It has one grave fault, however: there is not even an attempt at an explanation of the change in the radical leader; it is as if the author, who was himself one of the disillusioned, was still so much under the effect of the blow that he was not able to inquire into the psychological causes.

The two polemical volumes discuss, one the Language Question, the other the problems of love and marriage. This second booklet, *Free Divorce*, is a summing-up of the programme of the radicals in the *Gauntlet* discussion. The problems discussed hold such a place in Garborg's authorship, that we shall quote some lines from the last pages in order to make clear his point of view:

"The champions of love have for their aim marriage, that is, a voluntary body-and-soul communion between two people, a man and a woman, who have resolved to live together. We lay the

stress upon this: that they of their own free will have resolved to live together. Indeed, we lay so much stress on that circumstance, that if ever a life in common ceases to be voluntary on any side, then we declare the marriage thenceforth dissolved, meaning that then the two spouses shall be free to separate, without any society or police interference. In other words, marriage is to be a private matter that regards nobody but the persons implied.

"As the point at issue now, however, is that the liberty of divorce should be recognized, I have proposed provisionally to put the matter on the order of the day under the heading of 'Free Divorce'; the more correct expression 'free love' is, as I said, so covered up with misrepresentations that it is almost impossible to use it any longer. What we want is nothing but marriage. Good, honest, bourgeois marriage with real, honourable, bourgeois love, even with children, as the case may be. The only thing I claim is Free Divorce."

After having pointed out that this claim necessarily leads to that of a reorganization of the material conditions of life, a reorganization that at first looks like a Utopian dream and an impossibility, he goes on: "A young man who thinks he has discovered that the problems of the future are not unsolvable, does not make verse on the impossibility of life. He becomes fit for work. Not for fun do you find yourself in front of the gate that opens upon a new epoch. A religious joy will seize you, and a religious earnest. Faith is born in the tired soul; the powers of the will awake; you feel deep in your heart that you are being filled with the Holy Ghost."

Like most of Garborg's polemical writings, *Free Divorce* was written in Dano-Norwegian. So was also *Free Discussion* (1889), a volume of essays, the most remarkable of which is perhaps the one on *The Principles of Religious Cognition*, which Brandes thinks one of the most important Scandinavian contributions to the discussion of religious authority versus free thought.

In 1889 Garborg left Kolbotn with his family and went to Germany, where he passed the following years in different places, with one or two short trips to Italy, returning to Norway, however, during the summers. In the year after his departure he published a volume of *Letters from Kolbotn*, depicting the life on the mountain farm in summer and winter, with its toil and its numerous, but fortunately for the most part small, sorrows and annoyances, and its few, but great joys in the intimacy of the grand and beautiful mountain nature. For humorous telling of everyday events, and for broad and vivid descriptions of nature, these Letters have few rivals in our literature. Next to *Haugtussa*, this is the one of Garborg's books which is most read.

Later in this same year, 1890, Garborg published—both in New Norse and in Dano-Norwegian—the great novel *Hjaa ho Mor* (*Hos Mamma*, With Mamma), perhaps the most outspokenly realistic book he ever wrote. The heroine is the daughter of a poor functionary widow, and in the book we follow the efforts, first of the mother, then of the daughter, to keep up their social position in the midst of the most crying wants. At last the girl sees no other way out of misery than to marry an old and ugly but rich rake, called the " Death in Lübeck," who, helped by her mother, presses himself upon her. Although utterly realistic, its descriptions are less crude than those of *Menfolk*. It is too burdened with details, which, in spite of the intensity with which the events are seen and rendered, makes it rather heavy reading.

Shortly after its publication, *With Mamma* was translated into German—with such success that in Germany, where Garborg at the time was staying, he at once became the novelist of the day. The literary society *Freie Bühne* in Berlin awarded him an honorary prize of 1000 Marks, a sum that was very welcome to Garborg at the time. In Norway an application was made to the Storting to grant him a stipend, but without success. The refusal aroused much indignation among the literary public, and a private subscription was started to enable Garborg to go on with his literary work without the daily care. Some time after the Storting found a form for giving him some support without having the air of recognizing his opinions ; they granted a yearly sum for authors' stipends, with the tacit implication that part of the grant was to be given to Garborg. Some years later this grant was made into a regular " poet's stipend."

Garborg's next book, the diary novel, *Trætte Mænd* (Tired Men, 1891), shows signs of the author's turning away from Naturalism. The writer of the diary is Gabriel Gram, head of a division in some Government department and a man with modern ideas in literature, philosophy, and religion. He is a bachelor and has led a rather dissipated life, which may partially account for the state of his nervous system. He is by nature a keen observer, and his diary discloses to us the development and reaction of certain current ideas, doctrines, and practices in and upon people's minds, seen as it were through the magnifying-glass of Gabriel Gram's sensorium.

As a rule, fictitious diaries are dull reading. But here this form has been chosen for the facility it offers to the author of making his remarks on every side of the complicated questions with which he is dealing, and such remarks from the sharpest pen of Norway at the time cannot but be interesting. Although the book has no story to speak of, the remarks and reflections taken together give a clear and

unusually instructive picture of the evolution of a highly cultured mind in the difficult times towards the close of the 19th century.

What made sensation when the book appeared was that Gabriel Gram's evolution ends in the bosom of the Church. It caused consternation among the would-be free-thinkers, while the Church people, for many years Garborg's sworn enemies, rejoiced that the rank unbeliever had at last come to Canossa. The author's own opinion may be best seen from a contemporary letter to Jonas Lie: "If I have had any practical purpose with my book, it has been this: to combat dogmatical free-thinking—or rather, to deliver people from the very newest seminarism—and I have had the opportunity of seeing and feeling that there is more than enough of it in this blessedly young and naïve people. More persons than I had imagined have meant by free-thinking, not to think freely, that is, to think your own thoughts, but to think like Mr. So-and-so, to think as it is fashionable to think. Therefore the first edition of my book was out of print in a few days; the rumour was out that the free-thinker was beginning to convert himself, that consequently it was no longer modern to be a free-thinker. And then, of course, it is to run to the bookshop to inform oneself about the creed one is to have now. . . . I am privately informed that many people have felt deeply shaken in their free-thinking, only because they believed that one of the 'leading free-thinkers' had been converted! . . . Of course I have amused myself a good deal at the bewilderment caused by 'the conversion of the free-thinker,' although I am perfectly aware of the reasons for being sad about it too."

The religious problem, which had been the main theme of *Tired Men*, was taken up again, but this time from another side, in the author's next great novel, *Fred* (Peace, 1892). The scene of its story is Jæren, the country where Garborg was born and which he has characterized in the page quoted in the beginning of this chapter. The hero of the book is Enok Hove, a peasant and former schoolmaster, whose heart through all his life has been divided between religion and his love and care for his family farm. He is painfully conscious of the division, but can never make up his mind to reform and join the saints. Then the untimely death of a neighbour shakes him profoundly and presses upon him the urgent necessity of seeking God while it is still time. After much painful doubt and struggle with himself he is on the point of giving up in despair, when one night, in the midst of his horror of the evil one who has come to fetch him, a hand is held out to him—"only a hand—but in that hand there was a print as of a nail. . . . At last God had had mercy upon him. Now he had received an answer!—a sign so sure that

he never need doubt any more. An infinite peace flowed into his lacerated heart."

But the peace does not last long. Enok's outlook on life had always been narrow, and so is his religion too. And when, in his newborn joy and confidence, he tries to enforce his own ascetic views on his family, the result is that his wife is made unhappy and his children become strangers to him. When they no longer find sympathy with their father, they look for it elsewhere, and thus get into much trouble, which they might otherwise have avoided. This little by little takes the peace away again from Enok Hove ; finally, on being informed that his eldest son has left the country, leaving behind a young girl in a bad plight, Enok sees no other way out than to seek death in the tarn near his home. And there at last he finds the peace he had been seeking so long.

The psychological analysis of religious doubt and unrest and peace which we find in this book, is, without comparison, the best in Norwegian literature. The different moods of the hero's diseased mind are rendered with a rare, even painful, minuteness, which gives one a feeling of oppression that not even the beautiful descriptions of nature and the merry interludes with the gipsies are able to relieve more than for moments.

All these years Garborg had, besides his novels, also written a number of articles in the daily and periodical press, both on literary questions and on politics. In the year after the publication of *Peace*, he wrote his greatest work of literary criticism, his biographical study of *Jonas Lie*, which we mentioned in our chapter on that author. Jonas Lie, with his quiet ways and uncompromising love of truth and fearless defence of it, had always been to Garborg the most sympathetic among our great authors. During Garborg's stays in Paris about the middle of the eighties, they became acquainted and friends. The book therefore is written *con amore*, and succeeds so well in explaining Jonas Lie's evolution that it is considered the best biography of a man of letters in our literature.

During the two following years Garborg was much occupied with politics, especially the Union Question, where he was one of the foremost in the defence of Norway's complete and uncompromising independence. In 1894 he published a booklet on *Norway's Struggle for Independence from 1814 till Now*, and in the following year he assisted in starting a new radical and anti-union paper—his old *Fedraheimen* having ceased to appear some years before. He also helped to start a literary and general review, *Syn og Segn*, but his editorship was more nominal than real. Besides, he wrote several essays of literary and philosophic contents in other reviews. In spite of all these activities, Garborg in these

years found time to write the book that more than any other entitles him to a place among our great poets.

Haugtussa (1895) is the story of a poor peasant girl with the second sight—told in a series of almost independent poems. Gislaug, by her mother called Veslemoy ("Lassie") and by other people Haugtussa ("The Hill-Innocent," from her strange ways and her living so much among the hills with her cattle), is living alone with her mother—her father and elder sister being dead. About the age of sixteen her sister appears to announce to her that she is to be gifted with the heaviest of all mortal gifts, the second sight, enabling her to see the underlying world, or rather, to see behind things and appearances. After her first vision we get the following portrait of her—she comes running home to tell her mother:

"She is thinnish and dark and slim,
her traits are pure and brown,
her eyes, which are grey, look deep,
her manner is dreamy and still.
It's half-way as if a sleep
were enveloping all of her.
In movements, in voice, in all
there is a subdued calm.
A forehead noble, though low,
eyes shining as through a haze;
it's as if their staring gaze
saw through to another world.
She goes to her stool by the stove . . .
and sits there quietly lost.
Her bosom only heaves hard,
and a quiver passes her lips.
She is tremblingly thin and weak
in the midst of her beauty and youth."

We now get a series of poems of Veslemoy's life, both among the animals and among people, with occasional glimpses into the world beyond, which she alone can see. During her second summer in the mountains—as it seems, for the chronology of the story is not quite clear—she falls in love with the shepherd of the nearest *seter*. The story of their love, from the unconscious beginnings to the end, when she learns that he has forsaken her for another, richer, girl, is only hinted through the following lyrical poems, whose tone follows the various moods of hopeful, triumphant, and disappointed love. Veslemoy is now tempted in various ways—to throw herself away, to revenge herself either on her unfaithful lover or on his new girl, to win him back by black art and charms, to make herself insensible to her own suffering—but she triumphs over all her temptations. At last her sister appears again, and tells her that as a reward for her faithfulness, the *Volva* of wisdom, the Sibyl of the Norse

mythology, will take her through the hidden world and give her a glimpse of the law of life. With that promise the book ends.

The poems of *Haugtussa* taken separately are almost entirely lyrical, suggesting rather than showing the varied emotions of everyday life amid a beautiful nature and friendly people and animals. The story itself we more guess from the rhythm and succession of the emotions than learn from what is explicitly told. The life and love of Veslemøy is put into word-music rather than into narrative. If each separate poem may be taken as an independent whole, it is in the same sense as the passages or movements of a great musical composition may be played separately : they may be very beautiful thus, but their full significance comes out only when they are taken as parts of the larger whole. With *Haugtussa* we think that, however beautiful the single poems may be, the whole of the book is more beautiful still. Veslemøy, with her comparatively few and simple emotions, and still fewer and simpler thoughts, but emotions which are genuine and thoughts which are as truthful as they are simple—Veslemøy, by her true love and simplicity, wins life's deepest wisdom and highest happiness. And the poetical story that convinces us of the possibility of such a thing, ranges among the greatest works of literature.

From among the many nature poems of *Haugtussa*, we give as a sample an unrhymed translation of *Mot Soleglad* :

TOWARDS SUNSET

" Lo ! rising from the sea a land
with peaks and plains ;
against th' horizon clear they stand
in evening blue.

I often saw this land appear
through sea-fog grey.
It is a hidden, holy world
we can't attain.

She sleeps, that dainty row of peaks,
in dreamland bound ;
but then at sunset for a while
she wakes to life.

When Day like blood and fire sinks
in Ocean's blue,
then Fairyland becomes aglow
with colours bright.

Its glaciers quiver, burn, and shine
with golden hue.
Vermilion-glowing is the air
'round emeralds true.

But soon its fire pales and dies
like burnt-out glow,
serene again lies Fairyland
in evening blue.

My thirst for peace I there would still,
my pains forget:
Alas! it can't appear until
the sun has set."

Not only for its emotional qualities and ideas, but also as a piece of poetic craftsmanship, *Haugtussa* ranks among the masterpieces of Norwegian literature—which unfortunately cannot be seen from translations. Its turning to account of every value in the words, ideational, emotional, and musical, have only few parallels. Vinje's and Bjørnson's lyrics may at times soar higher,[1] and the feelings expressed, especially by Bjørnson, may be richer and the passion stronger. But they do not surpass Garborg's in depth of feeling, and they seldom, if ever, attain his mastery in the rendering of the thousand quivering shades of seemingly simple emotions.

Haugtussa belongs to Jæren, and so do most of Garborg's later books. The five-act play *Læraren* (The Teacher, 1896) is a sequel to the novel *Peace*. Its hero is Paul Hove, the son of Enok Hove in *Peace*. He has been a student of theology for some years, but had to leave the University because of his dissipated life. Returned home, he reforms, marries, and joins the local circle of saints. But the emotional and sermonizing religion of the brethren cannot long satisfy him, and after a long and painful struggle he at last sees that for him there is no other way of following Christ than literally obeying His orders—especially the first: to sell his property and give it to the poor. He does so, and then, of course, is considered a madman, or a hypocrite, or a dangerous anarchist, and is finally put in prison under the suspicion of having poisoned his wife in order to marry another woman. The following quotation will show what it was that made Paul Hove, the Teacher, turn away from the brethren:

"This sender of swords, this overthrower and remoulder of everything, the man who came to make high what was low and low what was high, to rouse kings and princes to a world-fight against himself—him we have made into a gentle Jesus, a ladies' Jesus, a prayer-book Jesus, nay, into a pillar of society, a padlock for our larders and money-chests, and a nightcap for good ratepayers; and the gospel for the poor we have turned into a bulwark and a stronghold for the mighty of this world."

[1] Not to mention Wergeland's.

Garborg's next book is *Den Burtkomne Faderen* (The Lost Father, 1899), a prose poem in the form of the diary of Gunnar Hove, Paul Hove's elder brother, the one who emigrated in *Peace*. He has now come back from America, where he had made money and founded a family. But his children are strangers to him, and now he hopes to find the home where he was born. But it is not easy: "Anguish will choke me, and disease burns my blood; and my heart aches and writhes with pain. But man must bear his lot until his back breaks. I will suffer and think that the sorer the suffering, the sooner the end." However, "it will seem certain to me that whatever mistakes one may have made, and however much one may have suffered, it is better to have tried life than not to have tried it."

Gunnar finds his brother, the former Teacher, and to him he little by little opens his heart, and he it is who at last is able to turn Gunnar's stoic resignation into a kind of religious hope. A few of Paul's sayings may give an idea of Garborg's view of life at this phase of his evolution:

Gunnar says that he is now old and has done with the world. Paul replies: "If you have done with the world, you are not old. For youth does not love the world; youth loves its dream. Nor does manhood love the world; manhood loves its strife. It is old age that loves the world. The world as it is, without idealization or dream: gold and might, glory and splendour, eating and drinking, women and ease, that which is worldly in the world is what old age loves."

Gunnar looks at the wasting of life, and Paul reflects: "Man has forgotten how to live. Life ought to be art, but it has become commerce. . . . Meaning for one's life and peace for one's soul are not to be had either for buying or for cheating. . . . But the Life Feel you have, brother. This bright spark in our bosom that glows in sorrow as in joy and fills every hour of our life with its quiet feast, *that* you have. And it was to you a compensation for everything, so that however much you suffered you still wanted to live. For whether our life is pain or pleasure is only a trifle compared with the Life Feel itself. . . . Fools ask why they exist, and idlers want to know the meaning of life. But nobody gets an answer unless he asks rightly; and he asks rightly who says: How shall I get a meaning into *my* life? Then the old wisdom answers—for here the new wisdom neither asks nor replies: This is the work that makes life worth living and rewards the pains thereof: that you work forth the new man in you."

On the rest of Garborg's work space obliges us to be very brief.

I Helheim (In the World of the Dead, 1901) continues *Haugtussa*, taking us with Veslemøy and her guide, the Volva, through purgatory and hell, where the suffering of the unfaithful in life strikingly symbolizes that necessary compensation inherent in things and deeds, of which Emerson speaks so eloquently in his essay. In spite of a number of magnificent poems, the book as a whole does not rise to the level of *Haugtussa*—and perhaps it would be unreasonable to expect the poet to take as strong an interest in the back of things of which he had already so powerfully painted the front.

Fjell-Luft og andre Smaastykke (Mountain Air and other Minor Pieces, 1903) is remarkable for its descriptions of scenery, some of which belong to the classical pieces of Norwegian prose.

Knudaheibrev (Letters from Knudahei, 1904) is a volume of memories, letters from his new Jæren home, where Garborg tells about his own life with a frankness that is seldom found in books published during the author's lifetime. These Letters are our chief source of knowledge about the author's childhood and youth, and especially about the development of his religious life.

In *Jesus Messias* (1906), a book of Biblical criticism on which he had worked for years, Garborg tries to get at the real Christ through the layer of Paulinism and Lutherism and Mammonism in which the Church and the world have embalmed him. The book aroused much discussion in the press and in the meeting-houses, and in a pamphlet, *The Lost Messiah* (1907), Garborg answered some of his critics.

In *Heimkomin Son* (The Son Come Home, 1908), we for the last time meet with the persons from *Peace*, *The Teacher*, and *The Lost Father*. A new generation has grown up, and the young have to some extent learnt from the mistakes of the old, so that the prospect is somewhat brighter than in most of the author's former books.

Since then Garborg has published a number of mostly small things, mainly in support of the Henry George movement, of which he has been an untiring champion in the Scandinavian countries. But his chief work during these years is his translation of the Odyssey into New Norse (*Odyssevs-kvædet*, 1918; new edition, 1919). By all competent judges Garborg's translation has been declared to be one of the best ever made. To many Norwegians it was something of a revelation to see how well even matter from so distant a sphere can be rendered in our language.

Bjørnson once sarcastically called Garborg the poet of observation who had made life's journey with an excursion ticket (*rundreise-billet*, ticket for circular journey). If Garborg has turned, it has

not been in a circle, but in a spiral, mounting ever higher. But by a closer observation we soon discover that he only turns towards different sides of the same problems. Through all his life he has been an intrepid champion for freedom and independence in every field, beginning with national and political freedom, then passing to freedom of thought and research ; he next took up the same standpoint with regard to love and marriage, a field where liberal ideas are tolerated even less than anywhere else ; and lastly, he has brought the same principle of personal freedom to bear on that question to which all the others lead up, the economic question. A highly receptive and impressionable nature, he has in all these respects been our national conscience for more than a generation, giving his warning whenever the free growth of individual or national personality was being tampered with. At the same time he has been the great artist with the gift of reproducing his own rich sensations in the creation both of living characters and of the most exquisite lyrical poetry, in verse and prose.

Of the authors hitherto treated, Garborg is the only one who is still living. Although he has written many and important books in the 20th century, his main work belongs to the 19th. But he has followed with unabated interest the literary and other movements in his country in the new century too, and the evolution seems to inspire him with hope. The following lines may be taken to sum up his view of the future of his country :

" Rich is the land and richer it shall become. Let us not complain that too much is left to be done. Times are before us, and our forces return. Little by little the people is awakening, and those most awake see homesteads shine out brightly where before were only dismal swamps and moors. The evil time when the people were strangers in their own home, when the youth deserted the land and the parents went weary and alone striving on neglected farms, when hope had disappeared from work, and joy from festivals and holidays, when God was angry and mists from the nether regions lay over the land like a reeking evil—that time shall end and be forgotten and be no more. The people shall grow fresh and strong and believe in good, and do good work and help the land on. And they shall dwell peacefully in their homes as long as the sun shines and the dew falls and the sea chants its song ; and it shall be true once more that work makes rich, and that a people which honours the memory of father and mother shall long live in their land."

CHAPTER XVI

KNUT HAMSUN. SOME WRITERS OF THE PRESENT

NORWEGIAN Literature, which towards the last decade of the 19th century was marked by four or five great names, has during the following generation been represented by a quickly growing number of writers. There has been considerable extension, with inclusion of new varieties, rather than the attainment of higher level. In their task of holding a poetic mirror up to the people, the early 20th century writers have been more occupied in getting in detail than in tracing the larger, general lines of the picture. The form mainly adopted has been the *novel,* largely under influence from France and from Russia, and otherwise in common with general literary developments.[1]

Two women are in the vanguard here, linking the past with the present generation, Amalie Skram and Alvilde Prydz. AMALIE SKRAM (1846–1905), in *Constance Ring,* 1885, and subsequent novels, appeared as our most uncompromising naturalist. From the standpoint of a highly sensitive "super-woman" femininity, she drew, with a strangely masculine vigour and realism, a series of dismal pictures of married misery, showing the sufferings of woman under the man-made rule. Amalie Skram received little honour from her fellow-countrymen during her lifetime, but has since become gradually more acknowledged both as the powerful realistic artist and as the fearless protagonist of woman's cause. The one book of hers which has been translated into English, *Professor Hieronimus,* 1895, describes, from personal experience, life in a hospital for mental disease. Amalie Skram's greatest work is the four-part novel about *Hellemyrsfolket,* 1887–98, the story of a jealous racial fate visiting the folly of the forefathers upon the progeny for generations.

Of softer metal is her contemporary ALVILDE PRYDZ (1848–1922). In her fine Nordland tale, *Gunvor Thorsdatter til Hærö* (Eng. trans. *The Heart of the Northern Sea*), 1896, and in other novels, she

[1] Many names will have to be passed over, or merely be mentioned, in this brief review, in which the question of whether English translations exist is one of the determinants for inclusion.

voices with a plaintive lyric idealism Arne's yearning "out over the lofty mountains." There is in them much poetry, glorious nature impressions, poignant thought and sentiment, less of consistent structure and composition. This is particularly noticeable in her second large novel, *Det Lovede Land* (Eng. trans. *Sanpriel: The Promised Land*), 1902.[1] The main subject of this authoress —as it was also the principal aim of her life—was the exercise of the universal human right to the fullest development of one's personality.

The early nineties were characterized by a reaction against the reigning ponderous problem-literature, with relief in slender jets of lyrical poetry—indeterminate, individualistic, flowing whither it, or the urge of circumstance, listed. Right through this movement, which we must here pass by, rises the most dominating figure in the Norwegian literature of the present.

Knut Hamsun (1859–) was placed as a child in the Lofoten Islands, among surroundings of grand scenery and hard and poor conditions of human life. He tried in succession a variety of professions—shoemaker, schoolmaster, quarryman, and navvy. Emigrating to America, he did not, as intended, become a Unitarian minister, but drove a street-car instead, and took other practical jobs, in shops, offices, farms, and on the Newfoundland Banks.

In October 1888 there appeared in the Danish monthly, *Ny Jord*, an anonymous sketch, *Hunger*, which attracted much notice and curiosity. With the revelation of the authorship, Hamsun was the literary lion of the day. He soon came back from America to Kristiania, publishing a superficial but amusing account of *The Intellectual Life of Modern America*. It was the novel, *Sult* (Eng. trans. *Hunger*), 1890, that established Hamsun's fame. The subject is the psychology of starvation. The hero is a young man trying to make a living by his pen in Kristiania. He gives this account of his thoughts and feelings in a state of intermittent hunger and constant misery, and we get the reaction of the hypersensitive man to every kind of impression, *e.g.* the type of the newspaper advertisements, the shape of the pavement flags, the looks of houses, windows, the sun, and the faces of young women. His overstrained nerves feel as shocks what to other people's more robust systems is hardly perceptible.

The only element in the hero of *Hunger* that can be called constant—in agreement with Henri Bergson's definition of character

[1] The translations appear to be good. Sometimes, however, the colours may get confused, as when in the sunset scene at the opening of *The Promised Land*, "Det rosenröde skifter i blod" gives rise to the blood-curdling translation, "The warm glow in the blood changes."

—is his extreme sensitiveness. Everything is new to him, and his reaction is always unexpected to the reader. The whole book is one long series of surprises, a fact which is accentuated by the author's style. Without actually torturing the words it brings out the least used sides of them, sides which, however, do not always wear well.

In the year after the publication of *Hunger*, Hamsun lectured in several of the largest towns in Norway on the state of our contemporary literature, which he found to be far from grand. Naturally enough this at the time roused indignation, but he repeated his sallies on our literary idols in his following books.

The hero of *Mysterier*, 1892, is an eccentric gentleman called Nagel, who settles in a small coast town, until he meets his fate in the shape of a young lady—or rather, two ladies—and commits suicide "whilst of unsound mind." Another interesting personage is "The Minute," the son of a clergyman, who is reduced to a coal-bearer and errand-boy for all kinds of people. Professor Morburger has shown that Nagel and The Minute represent different aspects of the author's own character, which explains the mysterious sympathy, and the more natural repulsion between them. Nagel falls in love with the rector's daughter, the proud and beautiful Dagny, but also with her counterpart, the humble, kind-hearted old maid Martha. It is the conflict in his soul between these two, neither of whom can satisfy all the cravings of his heart, which at last makes life unbearable to him.

Nagel is, in Hamsun's words, "an exile of existence," and has his own opinions about everything, opinions which we may take to be the author's own. One outstanding feature is his suspicion of everything that is recognized: "Gladstone is a knight-errant of justice and truth, his brains are crammed with recognized results. That two and two make four is to him the greatest truth under the sun. Shall we then deny that two and two make four? Of course not; I mention it only to show how Gladstone is eternally right. The question only is if you are mad enough about truth to accept its being offered to you, if your cognition has become so leathery tough as to be knocked out by such a truth. That is here the question. . . ." To Nagel-Hamsun, Tolstoy is a mere retailer at cheap prices of ready-made thoughts, Ibsen's profundities nothing but popular reasoning plus mystifications. The only poets spoken of with any appreciation are Alfred de Musset and Bjørnson. But *Mysteries* is full of the author's own throbbing life, his loves and his hates, his grief and his joy. For intensity of feeling it comes near to the great mystics, whose mental phenomena with the solution of all riddles also visit Nagel. Standing in the middle

of his own room, he is overwhelmed by visions of the infinite continuity and connection of all things: "How it shone, how it shone!"

Hamsun's extreme subjectivity is again expressed in an article on "Contemporary Tendencies in Norwegian Literature," in the *Revue des Revues*, 1893. In the writer's eyes our literature was stagnant chiefly for want of true psychology: "Bjørnson . . . as a psychologist, has not opened new ways: he is, in fact, rather a friend of humanity than a knower of men. This reproach, by the way, applies to the whole of Norwegian literature. Its psychology is a dry and systematic 'psychology of characters,' without a trace of the subtle and unconscious inconsequence that make the psychology of the best Russian novels, for instance, so thrilling. Taine's theory of 'the dominant faculty in man' becomes decisive to our authors, who had adopted this theory even before it was imposed by the authority of Taine. . . . But a man whose intellectual essence is forcibly squeezed into one single column, must of necessity psychologically become a character instead of being an individual."

To Hamsun (as to Bergson) *character* is—putting it shortly—the sediment of personality. The inorganic generally gains throughout life at the expense of the vital, organic,—the moral backbone becomes stiffer, the channels or ducts of life more thick-walled, and most people succumb in the end to a sort of moral arteriosclerosis.

In Hamsun himself the first thing we are struck by is his extraordinary vitality. Thus he can afford to neglect character so long as his only purpose is self-description and self-realization, as in his first two novels. But when his writings get a social purpose as in his two following books, character comes in—taking a subordinate place when he again returns to his subjective manner. This is what makes many of Hamsun's books such puzzling and—it cannot be denied—to many people such dangerous reading. His subjective writings are in reality neither moral nor immoral but "amoral." His more objective books have a morality which may be too aristocratic for most people.

Ny Jord (Eng. trans. *Shallow Soil*), 1894, is a rather slating description of the life of the literary Bohemians in the capital. It is one of Hamsun's freshest and healthiest books, though it certainly has neither the poetic exuberance of *Pan*, nor the serenity of *Growth of the Soil*. With all its one-sidedness and exaggeration, the work helped to reduce the reigning literary hero-worship to reasonable proportions, and to stir up the young writers to more confidence in themselves.

Pan (Eng. trans. *Pan*), 1894, is by general consent Hamsun's best novel. It purports to be from the papers left behind by the

lieutenant, Thomas Glahn, a mighty hunter who passes his days in his little hut in the wood with no other company than nature and his dog Æsop. Occasionally he goes to see people in the village, or receives a visit from there. The scene of the novel is laid in Nordland, and the people we meet with are as different from ordinary, everyday people as the nature of Nordland is from that of a monotonous plain with still-flowing rivers. Glahn, the hero of the book, literally shares the life of this strange nature, and the rhythm of his life, and especially of his emotional life, which is the proper subject of the book, is that of day and night, of summer and winter, of spring and autumn, of storm and sunshine. His senses, in every meaning of the word, are wide awake to every stimulus, and drink in whatever is offered to them. In his life with Nature his great passion is the mystic grandeur of the totality of things, but at the same time he can go into ecstasy over the smallest leaf of grass or over the friendly shape of a stone; nothing is too great or too little to him. In the same way in his relations to other people. He has one great passion, his love for Edvarda, the daughter of the village magnate, and this passion is deep and strong enough to make him throw away his life when he sees that he has lost her for ever. One short sample of its poetry must suffice. We are in August, at the time when the first frost of the autumn may be expected, the time that is popularly called the Iron Nights.

"'The first iron night!' I say. And a confused, passionate delight at the time and place sends a strange shiver through me. . . .

"'Hail! men and beasts and birds, the lonely night in the woods, in the woods! Hail! the darkness and God's murmuring between the trees, the sweet, simple melody of silence in my ears, green leaves and yellow leaves! Hail! the life-sound I hear; the sniff of a snout against the grass, a dog sniffing over the ground! A wild hail! the wild cat lying crouched, sighting and ready to spring on a sparrow in the dark, in the dark! Hail! the merciful silence upon earth, the stars and the half-moon, ay, to them and to it!'

"I rise up and listen. No one has heard me. I sit down again.

"'Thanks for the lonely night, for the hills, the rush of the darkness and the sea, rushing through my heart! Thanks for my life, for my breath, for the grace of being alive to-night, thanks from my heart for these! Hear, East and West, oh hear! It is the eternal God. This silence murmuring in my ears is the blood of all Nature seething; God weaving through the world and me. I see a glistening gossamer thread in the light of my fire; I hear a boat rowing across the harbour, the northern streamers flare

over the heaven to the north. By my immortal soul, I am also full of thanks because it is I who am sitting here ! ' "

This is a pantheistic mysticism like Walt Whitman's, but much more sensuous than his. It is, as somebody has expressed it, a mysticism, not so much of the soul as of the senses.

In the following years, 1895, 1896, and 1898, appeared Hamsun's dramatic trilogy on youth and age: *Ved Rikets Port* (At the Gate of the Kingdom), *Livets Spil* (The Play of Life), and *Aftenrøde* (Afterglow). The hero is the philosophic author, Ivar Kareno, radical and solitary in his youth, active but unsuccessful in manhood, tolerant and reconciled with environment in old age. The principal idea of the trilogy, the idea that what age has gained in experience does not compensate for what it has lost in intuition, and that therefore youth never ought to accept the superiority of old age, is the Nietzschean one which Hamsun has preached all his life, until he himself reached the fatal fifty. The plays, when performed in Kristiania, were received with much interest by the public, both because of their purely dramatic qualities, and because of their irreverent attacks upon prevalent conceptions of life and love.

In 1898 appeared *Victoria* (Eng. trans. *Victoria*), the story of a love. Notwithstanding the triteness of the plot—the miller's son who loves, but cannot win, the daughter of the great landlord —Hamsun has succeeded in making it extremely interesting, although the characters and events are not altogether convincing. It contains some of the finest pages of lyrical prose on love ever written, and will on that account be sure to maintain its place among the books dearest to the hearts of youth.

His next work, *Munken Vendt* (the name of the hero), 1903, is a dramatic poem in eight acts, almost as large as *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* together. The story of Ivar Kareno had been that of the ordinary genius, who, when he reaches the fatal age, is conquered by the years and by the God of good ratepayers. Munken Vendt is the man who is conquered by nothing, but who is strong enough to go his own way in spite of love, of age, of heaven itself, defying everything. It is a strange and bewildering picture of this life of ours, with a wealth of colour and curious details. The philosophy of it is elusive (for it is evidently intended to have one), and does not interefere with the beauty and force of the single parts and features of the drama or with the perfect mastery of the verse.

In the following year, 1904, Hamsun brought out two volumes, one of poetry *Det Vilde Kor* (The Wild Choir), the other a novel, *Sværmere* (Eng. trans. *Mothwise*). The latter is one of the lightest and gayest of Hamsun's books, and may be recommended to those

who want to get a fairly good impression of Hamsun before they go to the reading of his greater works. It has also the advantage of a good introductory notice on Hamsun's work by the translator.

In *The Wild Choir* is revealed a lyric poet of a very high order. None other, perhaps, has had so strong an influence upon the later poetry of our country. The spirit of Hamsun's verse shows a marked relationship to that of Byron's—one of the finest pieces is a letter to Byron in heaven, deploring that he is no longer on earth. The form is graceful and insinuating, and full of exquisite music.

Among Hamsun's later works—and almost as many have appeared after 1904 as before that date—a few only can be mentioned. *Under Høststjernen*, 1906, and *En Vandrer spiller med Sordin*, 1909 (Eng. trans. of both in one volume, *Wanderers*) have both for their subject the life of a wandering Jack-of-all-trades shortly before and shortly after his fiftieth year. The characters are mostly the same in the two books, but we are much further advanced into the autumn in the second one. The author makes no secret of the fact that what he here presents to us is his own views—and still more his impressions of Nature, of life, and of love—now that he is approaching the fatal age ; he therefore gives the hero his own name, Knut Pedersen.

One other book of Hamsun's, however, must be mentioned, because it is the most important of his later works—the work for which, above all, he got the Nobel Prize of 1920. *Markens Grøde* (Eng. trans. *Growth of the Soil*), 1917, is the most romantic work from later years—the word romantic taken in the good sense. Its hero is the strong farm-labourer Isak, who goes into the wilderness of the mountain forests, and there makes a home for himself and his family, thus becoming the founder of a new settlement, and a mighty and happy man, by his own work, without resorting to speculation or trading of any kind. Around him we see other settlers, some failing, others succeeding in their enterprise, according to their merits, that is, according to their work ; for work is the only, or almost the only, thing that matters.

Everything is seen through the eyes of these grandly simple personages themselves, and expressed in their voice. Only behind the scenes moves invisibly their kindly providence, the author. That which is the great artistic achievement of this work—a high philosophy borne out by simple, primitive beings—has given the translator a task which it is a feat to overcome. Unfortunately, the rude force of the original must often be lost : "*Det gik en orm igjennem konen,*" for instance, is a good deal more penetrating than "the woman felt a sting."

As a story of the opportunities of settlers in Norway, *Growth of the Soil* is too optimistic. But as a hymn to work and to live with Nature, even if this life must be of the most strenuous kind, it has few rivals in the literature of the world. In the following novel, *Konerne ved Vandposten*, 1920, it is perhaps only natural that Hamsun had to come from the heights whence the earth is subjected, down among the gossips at the village pump.

Looking back upon Hamsun's work from the point of view indicated at the outset—that of psychology and character, thence of morality—we may agree upon two or three things: firstly, that Hamsun's writings, by their genuine poetry and exuberant vitality, contain a treasure of information about human emotional life, a treasure that will enrich every soul that has the strength to take it up; secondly, that owing to the indistinction with which everything is included, especially in his subjective novels, and also owing to his unconcern as regards principles, the reading of his works, at least of the earlier of them, must be somewhat bewildering to any one of a lesser vitality than the author (that is, to most people); and, finally, that if his works are hardly fit to develop the moral framework that we call character, they are eminently fit to provide the personalities whose framework is already made, or who stand in no need of any, with that which is required to make up rich, personal lives.

Knut Hamsun may have received something like his due of recognition and renown in the world. This is far from being the case with his contemporary, Hans E. Kinck (1865–). The most serious difficulty in his way, or in the reader's way to him, is his extraordinary style. He is eminently the philologist and conscious linguistic artist—not to say artiste—performing veritable *tours de force* with his pen. The characters in his great novels of the peasants' life in the Vestland fjord-districts—as *Sneskavlen brast* (The Avalanche), 1918–19,—speak their native Hardang dialect, and Kinck's own *riksmaal* is well nourished with dialect words, so as to be something of an approach towards the *landsmaal*. Through this stylistic medium which somehow enhances both colour and dimensions, Kinck shows us portions of a mobile, intense human life, which is ninety per cent *animal*. Life is a cup of desire with dread on the bottom. As the critic Nils Kjær[1] remarks, Kinck's characters are "riddled from all sides by the poet's penetrating gaze." At times it may become difficult for the reader to reconstruct them, as when, for instance, a boy sees

[1] See p. 289.

his mother suddenly become "an ugly trold with a large face, rough and wrinkled like a rock. . . . The tears lying down her cheek like the naked band after the landslip over in the peak far north, after that terrific storm when every patch of grass and every tree disappeared under the avalanche"—or when, a little less pictorially — the rustic student Sjur Sjursen Sjursteigen, on board the fjord-steamer, escapes from the taunts of the first-class passengers and hurries forward to the second class "long, lanky, with large cheek bones, framing a thirsty, burning eye"— to whom "it was again as though the innermost thin white membrane in his mind trembled," until he is composed by his fair friend's bread and cheese in the steerage. One must get used to Kinck's highly poetic impressionist prose, the brilliant violence of which generally takes the reader captive.

Through Bjørnson's tales the Norwegian *bonde* made his solemn entry into literature. Since then other aspects have been added, and harsher features have come out. With Kinck we come to uncomfortably close quarters with the son of the soil, in an atmosphere charged with all-round suspiciousness and lurking malice, and other disagreeable products of a primitive social life in secluded mountain valleys.

In *Driftekaren* (The Cattle Dealer), 1908, which is considered by many critics our greatest national drama after *Peer Gynt*, the author ponders the curious fact of occasional individual eruptions of genius in our intellectual life—a Wergeland, a Bjørnson, an Ibsen—amid the grey wastes of commonalty, a circumstance reflected in the evident wave-motion in the history of the people, the alternating periods of activity and of torpor, somewhat as in the life of primitive hunter and fisher peoples. In a less spectacular but not less intense manner it is the tragedy of *Sigurd Slembe* repeated—of forces which, denied their natural expression, are at last turned inward with a suicidal hatred.[1]

Kinck has—with no mean share of the Norseman's energy—invaded the regions of the south of Europe, and has absorbed and put into some of his work a quantity of the sun and the colours, the *joie de vivre* and *abandon* of the South. From Italian life he has drawn characteristic essays and dramas like *Agilulf den Vise* (1906), and *Den Sidste Gjest* (about the last days of Pietro Aretino), 1910, charged with poetry and with learning. Nils Kjær expresses with a sigh the wish that the poet had not been quite so much of a scholar, or that he might have treated his learning a little more lightly, and "flirted a little with the bushel over his dazzling light." It is impossible to sum up the impression of this author—

[1] Cf. p. 170.

who, but for his bluffly personal, exuberant, overwhelming style, would be as widely read as our greatest—better than in the words of the dramatist and critic, Gunnar Heiberg :[1]

" When I think of what I have read of Kinck—or rather, when his name or that of one of his books arises in my memory—then I at once see a great hillside. And the hillside, sometimes steep and sometimes slanting, begins low down by a Vestland fjord, and rises and rises, right up to the high fells and far away. And it is ever glittering, as from dancing lights. Now there is a gleam from a tin can on board a barge on the fjord, then from a window-pane high up in the hills. Often it is the sun's eye itself, beaming quietly on the whole slope. Then again the rainy sky lies low over it. Or it is all white with snow, with green and grey between. Anyhow, it glitters here and it glitters there ! And deep down is heard the snorting of a steamer ; and when your eye and ear pass upwards you meet with trees and beasts and human creatures and tumbling brooks all about without much distinction ; they just go and stand and thrive and grow up the hillside, all together. By themselves they are nothing, just patches of colour in the picture. Once you see and hear a *foss*, then a horse, then a laughter, then a sobbing, then a gust of wind—single sounds here and there, sparkling in the great stillness of the hillside. It is the Vestland, as it rises forth, as it has risen and will rise, over the waters, gathered into one picture by that great painter, the poet Kinck."

It is natural that there should, by the side of these poet-artists and prophets of Pan, stand up a teacher of sober pragmatism. Johan Bojer (1872–) brings a message that is firm and clear like the Norwegian language in which it is delivered. His psychology is not that of the *sub*-conscious, but of man's waking life,—the intelligent, directive will and conscious, sustained endeavour. He would have us do away with the Utopias that the feelings conjure up, and rise through faithful work to a level of self-mastery and reason which behoves *homo sapiens*. In his early novels, *Et Folketog* (A Procession of the People), 1896, and *Den Evige Krig* (The Everlasting War), 1899, Bojer viewed through the magnifying glass the microbe of that characteristic fury of the modern Norseman—and especially of the *bønder* — his rabid, all-devouring preoccupation with politics. He shows the ravages of this national disease in the thousand homes and, with somewhat drastic symbolism, how it rushes its victim downstream towards destruction, to the triumphant strains of patriotic music.

It is again folk-psychology that occupies the author in the work

[1] See p. 290.

with which he made his mark, *Troens Magt* (Eng. trans. *The Power of a Lie*), 1903. In spite of some distortion here and there, arising from the strong concentration of the subject—some marvellous credulity in the characters and an incredibly blinkered conscience in the principal one—this is a captivating study of the mysterious ways by which the events and personal relations of daily life become truth or falsehood in the "unsophisticated" popular mind. We follow with a curious interest the muffling and the gradual domestication of the conscience of the man who has dishonestly ruined another, and who in the end stands, in the sight of society and of himself, as a pillar of unshakable respectability.

Bojer's greatest novel so far, because of the importance of its ideas and the intensity with which they are expressed is, according to general acceptation, *Den Store Hunger* (Eng. trans. *The Great Hunger*), 1918. People all over the world have been enthralled by the story of the gifted engineer, Peer Holm, who has worked his way up from humble beginnings, losing his faith in his childhood's gods in the struggle, who wins honour and wealth as a regulator of the Nile, returns home to a life of married happiness and ease, whence he is drawn on again into the claws of "the Steel," until, crushed and maimed between the jaws of our materialistic civilization, he survives to experience his crowning triumph, when, "alone on the promontory of existence," as a poor cottar, he goes out in the night to sow corn in his enemy's field,[1] that God might be. Not wholly alone is Peer, however, in this supreme scene, for his wife Merle stands by the fence smiling to him, "as if she too, the stricken mother, had risen up from the ocean of her suffering, that here, in the daybreak, she might take her share in the creating of God."

Among Bojer's other works, as *Liv* (Eng. trans. *Life*), 1911; *Verdens Ansigt* (Eng. trans. *The Face of the World*), 1917; *Dyrendal* (Eng. trans. *God and Woman*), 1919; *Den Siste Viking* (Eng. trans. *The Last of the Vikings*), 1921—the last-named is prominent as a work of art. We are taken into the rough life and hardships of the men who join in the great winter fisheries at the Lofoten Islands; and also into the strangely delicate inner life of these gruff and grim beings. With few, bold strokes the mood is skilfully conveyed, as in the scene in the booth where the dying fisherman is given the Sacrament by one of the comrades—the one chosen by the others, for his outward and inward cleanliness, as worthy to perform the sacred rite.

On the whole, Johan Bojer—with his serious, searching mentality, the energetic stride of his narration, marking the time, so to speak,

[1] The evil-minded neighbour whose dog had killed their child.

on essentials, and carrying no superfluities—is one of the most typically Norwegian of our present explorers in the new fields that are being laid under literature.

If Bojer can almost vie with Hamsun in world-wide popularity, Tryggve Andersen (1866–1920) shares the comparative isolation of H. E. Kinck, not by reason of any strangeness of subject or impenetrable exuberance of idiom, but on the contrary because of the classical composure of a style that has no irregularities to strike the taste for sensation. His works may appear too calm and monotonous and need some examination before their clear-obscure perspective is discovered. Kinck is, curiously enough, among those who consider Tryggve Andersen's prose as the purest, most classical *riksmaal*, and he finds the often misused reference to the clarity of the Dutch painters to be in place here. Andersen himself has explained how he "delved the words from the mines of language, melted them, cleansed them, and wrought the whole into a flexible, durable shirt of mail round the image." He has succeeded in producing a potent style of his own, which holds in solution a wealth of esprit and wisdom without any crystallization of either. The author is wholly absorbed in his characters and takes us with him into their times and views.

Andersen appears as the sure, fully developed artist already with his first work, *I Cancelliraadens Dage* (In the Times of the Court Councillor), 1897, a group of short stories from the opening years of the 19th century, which were the closing years of the long period of union with Denmark. The scenes are laid in the author's own native district, which he knows intimately—the generous, flowing hillsides backing up to the woodlands, on the north-eastern shores of Lake Mjösen,[1] the borderland between the great well-defined Gudbrandsdalen with its flourishing *bondekultur*, and the undulating, fertile, well-populated country of Hedemark proper, with its ancient city of Hamar. Here we follow the sad fortunes of the practically exiled Danicized officials and their families—the magistrate, the parish priest, pensioned officers, etc.—who try to preserve their acquired tastes and interests, or at least some interest in life, by convivial gatherings at their various country-seats. But their isolation in natural surroundings, whose appeal was not yet fully understood and among people who regarded them largely as aliens, must inevitably lead to moral and social degradation. Altogether this series of etchings, where every silent detail speaks, presents an intensely vivid picture of these days of the decline of an *ancien régime*.

Andersen has shown in his books a predilection for the treat-

[1] Cf. p. 55, footnote.

ment of aspects of individual or social decay. His greatest novel, *Mot Kveld*, 1900, with a motto from the Faust-legend about the endlessness of Inferno, is the story of a theorist who has forgotten to live. The lawyer Erik Holk, on the point of being reclaimed for life by love of woman, is reminded by a hallucination that his father died a maniac, thus discovering within himself " the snake's nest of madness " into which he has no right to take any other being. The developing epileptic observes the scouts of approaching insanity in the upwelling of momentary impulses to murder, especially when confronted with the weak and defenceless. " How long will the keeper in him retain the superiority ? " This dissociation of a personality proceeds in the environment of a small coast town which is fretted by gossip and jealousies, and terrorized by a religious revival. Under all this, Erik Holk is, in the author's graphic expression, " wading about on the bottom of night," up to the final semi-subjective scene, when the place is wrapped in a drought-haze and daylight does not appear. " Then there was a blood-red light ; smouldering, glowing clouds lifted the night from off the sea. . . . The sea is on fire ! . . . There came a noise as from countless gigantic whirling millstones : thought could not take form ; speech could not be heard. And the waters of the deep were moved and the roots of the mountains trembled. And there was light. Light immense that quelled the vision of men and made them writhe like blind maggots. Lightning flashes stood up, and remained : *the Sea is on Fire.*"

Tryggve Andersen is contained and self-controlled and makes one feel the natural law, even in the midst of horror. As already suggested, he is only *too* exact and measured for popularity—like some elegant divine who carves so skilfully that there falls no scrap to the little dogs.

It may be considered as some little indication both of the relative productiveness and popularity of this and the following writer that, while there are at present in the British Museum Library only two books by Tryggve Andersen there are thirty by PETER EGGE (1869–). Egge is a *trønder*, a native of Trondhjem. He made his mark, in the early nineties, with a series of faithful and simply told stories from the life of the common people, descriptions which were praised by Bjørnson and Jonas Lie. From these folk-psychological studies Egge has subsequently developed into a novelist, and also a dramatist, of rank. His considerable but not very varied output is characterized by a high ethical earnestness and a firm but gentle human sympathy. His subject is man and woman and the relation between them, which he sees as essentially a relation of personal combat. The novel *Majnætter* (May Nights), 1902, for

instance, gives the tragedy of the polygamous male and monogamous female, and the best-known of his works *Hjærtet* (The Heart), 1907, is the tragedy of that innermost soul-solitude which the union between man and woman can rarely redeem. With an almost equally profound knowledge of the psychology of either sex, the author gathers and brings out the deep differences in their constitution. In *Hjærtet* the title-subject is well hidden. A man and a woman marry almost as strangers—the justice of the story does not seem to see that the man's mentality is to blame for this—and their marriage is only a continued estrangement, until they are finally brought together by their common shipwreck. She is the daughter of a musician, whose staff and comfort she has been in his old age, and with whose memory she surrounds herself. He is a business man, and the son of a business man, and he feels the human element ebbing out of him as the years pass. Without many words or other ways of expression, he bitterly ruminates his wife's half-conscious outburst about the other man, that " he that can *sing* has conquered." *He* was a mute bird in the woods, and the others could sing. She had become " his," but is elsewhere all the same, looking towards, and at, *the child*. He cannot understand this. " It must be in a kind of delirium that she told this truth about herself and her marriage."

The dialogue—when they do come out of their mutual isolation —is one interrupted and resumed passage-of-arms, each trying to run the other through. The end comes rather unexpectedly, and the concluding words of reconciliation sound a little awkward and affected, perhaps because of year-long want of practice. The husband has met with an accident and is at length conquered through his wife's solicitude and care. The heart is half-way revealed at last.

Differently from Tryggve Andersen who appeared in literature with a perfected style, Peter Egge has developed, enriched, and refined his in the course of his production. *He* also is a conscious, conscientious artist, hammering and welding his language into the greatest possible conciseness. The poetic element, however, is not absorbed and diffused in the narrative, but detaches itself here and there and *drips*, as it were, on the reader, not always pleasantly. The metaphors may be excellent — for instance: " At times her words were swallowed up by her weeping, and appeared on the surface again like a swimmer who is labouring against a heavy sea." But sometimes quotation might almost be taken for parody, as when " curiosity crept about in her, tickling. It walked on thousands of tiny, slender feet, and every foot trod on a nerve." Or when (as a reviewer points out in

his latest book [1]) a gentleman returning home very late at night "wrapped the back-streets about him like a cloak," such violence might have been condoned if subjective or in reference to the stage of sobriety of the gentleman in question. However, such irregularities have little depreciatory influence on this writer's work, which with its seriousness of tone and skilful craftmanship looms large in our fiction.

The subject of "he and she" or "she *v.* he," the main underlying one of literature since Genesis, is the central one also of the modern Norwegian novel, and is in no danger of being exhausted, since women have sat down to write. To those who do not share Otto Weininger's view that woman is a mere projection of man, and the woman-soul, like Solveig in *Peer Gynt*, a kind of anchor or kedge thrown out to haul him upwards and on, who believe that the fundamental relation in question is in need of and capable of further humanizing and beautifying, and last but not least, that progress will gain by a more developed and independent womankind—to them the works of Camilla Collett, the pioneer, of Amalie Skram, of Barbra Ring, and of Sigrid Undset are a welcome omen.

Barbra Ring (1870–), who is largely known for a succession of very popular books for the young, has in her later works, *e.g.* *Før Kulden Kommer* (Eng. trans. *Into the Dark*), 1915, given the tragedy of the girl who has been led to marry, too young, a man with whom she has nothing in common—the tragedy, indeed, of Constance Ring. But in Amalie Skram's book it is the husband that commits suicide, in Barbra Ring's it is the wife. This confession, "before the cold sets in," before the last step "into the dark," is written out of the depths of a woman's despair, and she has much to say. There is the insight springing from anguish, and also the oversights. The crime of Education violating the instincts of the child is seen, but less clearly the desirable adoption of instinct by the intellect. Frequently the flow of the narrative gleams in some pithy characteristic phrase, as: "Nothing improves a woman's looks so much as to have a man in love with her." (A man might not have hit on that generalization.) In the teeth of despair there is still room for sarcasm: "If a man would refrain from idealizing the woman he loves there *might* be fewer unhappy marriages. But if he did not idealize his mother there would certainly be fewer happy men. A man's mother is sacred and unassailable, whoever she may be. Even her stews and puddings are something beyond the reach of any other woman in the world, more particularly of her son's wife."

[1] *Den Hellige Sjö* (The Sacred Lake), 1922. Egge has, amongst many other things, produced a popular comedy, *Jakob og Kristoffer*, 1900.

Sigrid Undset (1882–) had her first signal success with the novel *Jenny* (Eng. trans. *Jenny*), 1911—a success which it took a little time to vindicate, but which has been surpassed with her latest works. Rose, the heroine of *Vaaren* (Spring), 1914, and Jenny both have the longing for love, but Rose also the capacity. At least it *comes* with dutiful resignation in the family, as the ever-renewed miracle of spring, and then the everyday is filled with music. Contemporary critics were not altogether pleased with Mrs. Undset's establishing herself as the champion of the family; but she goes, as a moralist, considerably deeper than the *mores*, and, as the critic Kristian Elster [1] has well pointed out, she is really the champion of Life's lasting rights *versus* the little opinions of the day. From impressions dating back to childhood, Sigrid Undset has shown the dull weight of brick-and-plaster, barrack-built Kristiania on humanity that drags to and fro between work and sleep and feels the strain of a hopeless longing. The dingy greyness of "*Welhaven's Gate*" [2] remains one of the lasting impressions from *Jenny*.

Another English translation is *The Garland*, Vol. I. of the historical novel *Kristin Lavransdatter* (I. *Kransen*, 1920; II. *Husfrue*, 1922; III. *Korset*, 1922), by which an addition has been made to the world's classics. The writer's union of scholarship and poetic faculty of creating living characters has here produced a series of fascinating pictures of Norway in the first half of the 14th century. We are taken into Kristin's life at her parents' farm, high up in the Gudbrandsdal, the child's visit to the city of Hamar with its cathedral, later on to Oslo, with convent life, and town fair, where she meets her knight-errant. As wife and mother and widow she works heroically through life, and succumbs after an act of mercy when the Black Death ravaged Norway.

Historical fiction has rarely produced a truer resurrection of the past, a sense that the past is living in the national organism. There are scenes and situations of great richness and charm—also others, repulsive and full of horror, for the author is not hampered by any consideration for nerves. She brings in all the detail that is characteristic, and in places the description becomes very broad. In these more primitive times there is naturally more opportunity for the action of the instincts. These human beings are more deeply merged in the blood than modern man, thence also more nourished and alive. Naturally the women-portraits, and principally Kristin, are the fullest and most interesting. It may be a question whether there is any real

[1] See p. 289.

[2] In the Quartier Latin of Kristiania.

man to be found among the pages of either Sigrid Undset or Barbra Ring.[1]

Sigrid Undset's style has been criticized as occasionally loose and careless, not sufficiently worked out. This can hardly be said of her great historical novel. The style here is moulded on that of the Sagas, with short, firm periods, and at the same time holds an astonishing amount of poetry. This springy *riksmaal*, with its considerable contingent of Norse and dialect words, is—in a different way from Kinck's and Andersen's, perhaps somewhere intermediately—another example of the vitality of the " Dano-Norwegian " language.

It is time, however, to make some note of the " New Norse " literature of the present, which, in proportion to its bulk, is not growing less vigorously. The most important figure besides Garborg is Jens Tvedt (1857–). He is the most reliable portrayer of the westland peasants' life, expressing their thoughts in their own speech. The wealth of dialect idiom, which in Kinck appears as cumbrance, in Tvedt's *landsmaal* is undeniably wealth. Slow and sure flows the account of these peasants who have got good time like the seasons and the growth of the soil. Tvedt has at least done clearing work on some of that ground where Hamsun has raised his great hymn to the labour of the fields. Having the essential first-hand knowledge of his subject, Tvedt also unites the powers of the psychologist with those of the poet. He has shown the chief basis for the tragical in our peasants' life to be the conflict between love and money. It is a question of arranging marriage with consideration of the union, not only of the young people, but also of the farms, and the peasant youth do not, as a rule, marry against the will of their parents. These people are as calculating in their contract with the divine powers as any Roman. In *Madli und Apalen* (Madli under the Apple Tree), 1900—generally considered as Tvedt's masterpiece—the woman Madli marries the old crippled tenant-farmer Sjur, not without a prospective eye on the farm which one day (when, with God's help, he will come to an end, the old man) should come to her as a reward. The motive of the story is chiefly the everyday thoughts of this woman, not particularly refined, but sincere and true. She has the innate strength and resilience of this hardy race, whose character has received its impress from the mighty scenery around. Madli is gifted with a

[1] Mention must also be made of the full-blooded feminine art of Nini Roll Anker (1873–) in her novels *Benedicte Stendal*, 1909, and *Fru Castrups datter*, 1918.—The typical man of some of these authoresses is too often a rather shapeless rag-bag of paltry appetites, if he be not an athlete who always has himself in hand and, knowing that there runs a certain straight boundary-line through life, keeps on the right side of it.

natural courage for toil that truly "makes drudgery divine." There is over Tvedt's long series of peasant-tales a cheerful sympathy and mild humour which relieves their monotony and makes them, like a mountain melody or *slaatt*, a true expression and reflection of the elements of the people's character.[1]

Whilst in Tvedt the objective realist is in the ascendant, Rasmus Løland (1861–1908) is subjective, sensitive, with a wealth of delicate moods. He is a poet in prose. The events of his tales take place mainly in the minds of the personages; the thing is seen and written from within. His tales are sometimes only too well thought out. That consummate short story *Huskross* (A Vixen), for instance (in the collection *Ute og Heime*, 1901), is with its dialogue and events of almost too fine and close a texture for reality. Löland illustrates that finesse and that peculiar etiquette of the peasants which frequently suffers from collisions with the coarser one of the townspeople. The novel, *Aasmund Aarak*, 1902, tells of a man who, like the author, has through illness got the opportunity to think to pieces the world-view taught him in his childhood, and eventually to interpret and to reconcile the laws of science and the audible voices of Nature into one assertive psalm of life. Löland also wrote exquisite stories of child life with an intimate psychological understanding. There is something femininely intuitive about this author which captivates one's interest, even with his circumstantial treatment of subjects often dreary enough. Garborg is eloquent in his praise, finding in Løland "an exceptionally healthy view of life, a quiet irony, a genial perception for little traits and incidents and delicate shades of meaning, an eminently self-contained calm in the descriptions, and a well-nigh magic power to spell-bind the reader, word by word, sentence by sentence, with an interest that slowly and steadily rises to the highest degree of fascination."

Among the older and younger *maal*-writers—Vetle Vislie, a creator of interesting female figures; Sven Moren, the narrator of *Storskogen*, of the great woods and rivers and lakes of the eastland; and the dramatist Olav Hoprekstad, whose technically excellent plays with their pithy proverbial dialogue are valuable documents on Norwegian country life and customs—Olav Duun (1876–) is coming forward as one of the most promising. Duun shows a distinctly masculine quality, a variety and richness of colour, and a vitality that strongly contrast him to Rasmus Løland. His field is Namdalen, to the north of Trondhjem, whence he has given vigorous sketches of the life of the small farmers. That it is not

[1] Tvedt's work has been carried on by Lars Jaastad and Sjur Bygd. Kristofer Janson has also thrown light on the peasants' life.

merely the outside picture will be gathered from a notice of his novel, *Det Gode Samvite* (The Good Conscience), 1916: "These are living men and women, as they always are in Duun's books. I have met good people who tell me that these persons are only rogues and devils who speak the Namdal dialect, and such matter they do not care to read. May be they *are* largely that; but . . . any one who is at all accustomed to honest self-trial will have caught sight of wicked faces here and there in his own dark corners —and it may not be altogether irrelevant to see the faces in print sometimes. However this may be, there are few books that help us better than Duun's do to understand men and women in our own times and in our own country, granted that we do not impatiently free us from their grip, but study them, interpret, and—by all means—contradict them seriously, as they deserve." [1]

Besides Garborg, there are other poets who have worthily upheld the tradition of *landsmaal* verse. Among these PER SIVLE (1857–1904) was a warm, spontaneous lyrist, whose patriotic songs (also in the *riksmaal*) have glow as well as ring. He has also left us some genuine, pathetic tales of child life. As the people's poet he has been followed by ANDERS HOVDEN (1860–) who in *Bonden*, 1901, and later collections, sings the life of the country-people on holy and ordinary days, and is best inspired by the grandeur of his native Sunnmöre. KRISTOFER UPPDAL (1878–), who in his novels has described the encounter of the peasants with the railway workers who build their barracks through the land, in his virile, wilful poetry strives to introduce a new metre and new values of rhyme and cadence.

But lately a young *landsmaal* poet has risen head and shoulders above his contemporaries. That is OLAF AUKRUST (1883–) with his piled-up, towering "Cairn Against the Heavens," *Himmelvarden*, 1916. In a language whose musical qualities are put to the fullest use, he describes a man's passage through the spheres of existence visualized by Dante. This is a remarkable group of religious, philosophical poems in the present time, full of aspiration and faith in personal progress, in a mystical reunion of spirit and Nature. The whole is seen against the background of the fjord- and mountain-land with its racing lights and shadows:

> "There lay so fair green landscapes,
> peaks glittering, rock-walls steep,
> and mist and rack in mountain clefts
> and stream and reeling deep.
> Such too was my own landscape,
> the life I'd led to rout:
> I saw it right thro' sun and tears
> in vista far spread out."

[1] Abbreviated from O.R. in *Syn og Segn*, March 1917.

The lesser productions of Aukrust evince a rare poetic fusing and transfiguring of the materials.

Returning now to our review of the *riksmaal* writers, we meet a figure not unlike the author of *Pan*, that is, the chosen painter of the Nordland, ANDREAS HAUKLAND (1873–), with his novels, written in a highly poetic prose: *Ol-Jørgen*, 1902–05; *De Store Skoge*, 1905; *Havet*, 1906; and others. His descriptions, though vibrant with artistic feeling, are more objective, less temperamental, than Hamsun's. Vying with the more versatile Bernt Lie[1] in his Nordland tales, Haukland shows in a flash the Arctic shores and waters, with the struggle of all life—the thrashers attacking the whale and leaving, as it were, "a bleeding wound on the breast of the sleeping sea." He paints the northern summer night drawing its white veil over islands and ocean. "The mountains towards the sea float in the purple sky and those inland flash like tongues of bluish fire into the pale night, until they grow dark against the reddening sky. Like a glowing wheel the midnight sun rolls along the darkened northern ridge, while the great, slow swell of the ocean is only known by a strange, undulating succession of light and shadow over the endless expanse." And over this fairyland is scattered a people with strong, elemental hates and desires, a great deal more earthly than *The Visionary* of Jonas Lie.

Very different from Haukland's full, flowing art is HANS AANRUD (1863–) in his almost photographic representations of the landscape and folk-life of eastland Norway. No one could better describe a sleigh-drive through the wooded, snow-glittering valley. Aanrud is refreshingly objective after our wealth of prose-poets. With a quiet, effective energy he draws his clear-cut pictures from peasant life. Everything is drawn to scale, seen or thought in its right place. Aanrud has a keen eye for the humour of the little hitches and frictions of daily life, and could provide matter for comparison with W. W. Jacobs and his, more overdrawn, pictures of life on the lower Thames.[2]

The *Sørland*, the southern coastland which links the western fjordland with the broader, gentler landscape of the east, has also found its singers and portrayers. The two brothers, THOMAS KRAG (1868–1913) and VILHELM KRAG (1871–), supplement one

[1] BERNT LIE (1868–1916), the nephew of Jonas Lie. Collected Edition, 1917–18. REGINE NORMANN (1867–) has also given sombre, powerful descriptions of Nordland life.

[2] Of the people of our backwoods, Østerdalen, J. B. BULL (1853–) has written his striking, deservedly popular *Folkelivsbilleder*.

another, in so far as the former gives the gloomy aspects of the landscape and the seascape—the dark troughs, so to speak, between the waves; the latter giving—in his novels like *Hos Maarten og Silius*, 1912, and in his songs, from the early nineties and upwards—more of the sunshine that glitters on the wave-crests. Vilhelm Krag dwells on the subdued grace of the region, with its nearest approach to the European romantic scene: the old manors with their stately avenues and remnants of old-time, aristocratic life. His musical songs show influence from Danish poets like Holger Drachman and J. P. Jacobsen; but he can also brace himself to energetic, typically Norse expression as in the pioneer song beginning "*Brøite sig rydning i svarteste skog*" (Cut oneself clearing in thickest of woods). Thomas Krag is more deeply fascinated by the fate of families doomed to oncoming disaster. Homelessly he loved to walk in dying forests and to read the story of people who once lived, and are no more heard of.[1]

Life in a westland fjord-district, particularly the relation between town-bred official and the native *bonde*, forms the subject of a series of studies by the literary historian and novelist, HJALMAR CHRISTENSEN (1869–). The most successful of his novels has been *Fogedgaarden*, 1911, in which the ancient Sheriff's house is the symbol of a departing aristocracy of culture. *Den Gamle Bygd og den Nye* (The District in Old and in Modern Times), 1913–14, gives a striking picture of the change produced by industrial development, the harnessing of water-power by means of foreign capital. These are captivating pieces of social history, from the "good" old times up to the bustle of the present, written by a keen observer in a clear-cut, rapid style. The author's active interest in the questions of the day and his lack of patience with such as think and believe otherwise—with all kinds of reactionaries—may sometimes bias his judgment, and in parts impair his work from the artistic point of view.

Other writers who, like the brothers Krag, have taken up descriptions of Sørland life are OLAF BENNECHE (1883–), in his historical novels,[2] and GABRIEL SCOTT (1874–). The latter is also one of our most graceful lyrical poets, has written boisterous comedy and short stories for children in Aanrud's vein. His most thoroughly successful work has been the idyllic novel, *Kilden* (The Source), 1918, "the letter about the fisherman Marcus." It is the story of a simple, lonely soul, who lives in his cottage on the rocks above the little fishing village, unaffected by people's jeering and everlasting strife

[1] His lyrical novels, *Ada Wilde*, 1896; *Ulf Ran*, 1897; *Daudemandsholmen*, 1903; *Gunvor Kjeld*, 1904; and others.

[2] *Rygnestadgutten*, 1911; *Knekten Mundius*, 1912; *De Bönder av Raabygdelag*, 1913.

for gain, communing with "the Source" in a childlike way, which the author makes articulate and poetic. It is Isak of Sellanraa, muted, so to speak, and in the minor key—"Growth of the Sea." While the summer night lays its dusk over the sound and harbour, and the sea bird becomes silent on its rock, and all worldly things retire, Marcus looks up and meets the gaze of the Eternal. "It had stolen upon him and watched his work. A curious friendliness had gathered round him: it had something to communicate to him, a quiet message to the dust; it wanted to initiate him into some distant and secret aim."

In Ole Lie Singdahlsen (1876–) and Mikkjel Fønhus (1894–) the midland valleys and forest regions of *Hallingdal* and *Valdres* have found apt interpreters. The former has given realistic, occasionally charged, pictures of the Halling peasants' life. The latter follows with intimate knowledge the wild beast roaming through the pinewoods, and folds with no less sympathy the old hunter who reflects that "he had lived his life as he himself wanted it, poor in possessions, but rich in happenings. Throughout all the years he could remember there blew a cold breeze from wind-worn trees and naked mountains. His memories stood out like bright flowers, smelling sweetly of heather and moss."[1]

Among the younger novelists, Kristian Elster[2] (1881–) takes a prominent place.[3] *Min Bror Harris*, 1917, is the story of a talented man who wrecks himself and others by his lack of character and his desire for stimulants, told by his less dangerously gifted brother with a considerable amount of sane philosophy. The style has a gentle strength and equability which is very pleasing. Elster is also an essayist and a critic of taste and discernment.

Easily first among our not very numerous essayists stands Nils Kjær (1870–). He writes with elegance and wit on anything from Idealism—which he does not like—to Whitechapel, which he rather likes. He wields the lightest and most graceful pen among

[1] *Troll-Elgen*, 1921. The English translation, *The Trail of the Elk*, from which the above is quoted, on the whole—excepting a few mistakes and gratuitous additions—succeeds in transferring the strong, resin-laden atmosphere of the original.

[2] The son of Kr. Elster (1841–81), forester and novelist, mentioned p. 13.

[3] Among others, which space here excludes: Oskar Braaten, in stories and plays, the faithful representer of the working people's life in Kristiania and suburbs. Johan Falkberget, with powerful tales of life on the fells. Ronald Fangen and Eilert Bjerke tackle great problems of life in their novels, which teem with motley ideas, as the futurist painting with impressions which the eye must collect.

Norwegian prose-writers. For taste and critical quality he might be a Dane, the Danes being markedly superior to the Norwegians in this respect. He has a hearty dislike of the *landsmaal*, and protests against philological tampering with our folk-tales and fairy-tales, against "tattooing old Asbjørnsen with a map of the dialects." His similes are happy and illumining, as when he somewhere describes a lobster-pot as a piece of civilization lowered down amid the semi-tropical vegetation of the mysterious sea-bottom, where it lies friendly and inviting like a missionary station in darkest Africa. His comedies, e.g. *Det Lykkelige Valg* (The Happy Election), 1914,—about the language-wrangle, prohibition, and other national hobbies,—have been very successful.

A heavy-weight by the side of Kjær is GUNNAR HEIBERG (1857–). If the former carries the lightest pen, Heiberg certainly carries the sharpest. Also, he knows no mercy in using it against all that he sees as narrowness and pettiness. After Kielland he is the most European figure among our men of letters. His polemics have been largely directed against the Church, against Christianity in the shape of Ecclesiasticism. Heiberg the iconoclast has done a good deal to lighten the somewhat overpowering weight of authority from the great men of the former epoch, for the benefit of the generation that was young at the beginning of the 20th century. As time has passed he has, however, become less polemical, more of the *laissez-faire* philosopher, occupied with purely æsthetic matters. Heiberg is undeniably, with Kinck, our leading dramatist, and also stagecraftsman, in the present. Because of their consummate art—whatever the value of their ideas may be —plays like *Balkonen* (The Balcony), 1894, and *Kjærlighedens Tragedie* (The Tragedy of Love), 1904, will go down to posterity as classics. The subject of both is the sufficiently lasting one of the almighty Eros, clad at most in a goatskin, hauling helpless mortals out of those coverings of family feelings, morals, society, and civilization which they are constantly weaving around them. *Balkonen* led to a violent controversy, in which the literary historian and later philosopher of history, CHRISTEN COLLIN, took a prominent part on the side of Morals and Society.[1] Bjørnson, in his drama, *Laboremus*, meant to dispatch the Gorgon of *The Balcony*.[2]

Little has been said about lyrical poetry. As a matter of fact, the times themselves have kept verse in the background. The last years have seen some output of well-turned, pretty poetry, exquisite

[1] *Literature and Life*, 1900; *Kampen om Kjærlighet og Kunst*, 1913.

[2] Trans. by E. J. Vickner and Glenn Hughes, in vol. xxxiii. of the American magazine, *Poet Lore*. Translations of SIGURD IBSEN'S works, see List.

goldsmith's and silversmith's work; but any strong flow of song there has not come so far. The poets of the *fin-de-siècle*, who had at least some tunes to sing, appear somewhat solitary and dishevelled. The stateliest figure among them, and one that stands active yet, is that of Nils Collett Vogt (1864–). Belonging to a family of the Conservative party, he was carried away as a youth by Bjørnson's great speech at the unveiling of the Wergeland statue in Kristiania, 17th May 1881. "It was as though somebody called my name, drew me towards him, and inspired me with enthusiasm for a greatness that I had dimly felt."

He is himself to a degree the hero of his novel, *Familiens Sorg*, 1889, the would-be revolutionary son, the Shelley—but an ineffectual one—whom parents, school, and society at length succeed in bringing back to the fold. At least, Collett Vogt has now become wholly respectable in a society which has incorporated a good deal of that freedom which his youth thirsted for. When he lost, in consequence of violent social enthusiasm, his cultured friends, without meeting much response to his lyrical outbursts from the prosaic northern *plebs*, a tone of bitterness gradually entered his poetry. In early life he wished to be as a fir in the forest, to wave like a banner over the land; later, he saw himself standing like a tattered tree in the midst of a frozen wood. His sympathy is with the temporarily defeated, as in his poem *Sea Birds*:

. . . . . .
"Wholly human were they on earth,
and therefore many a time,
but mostly thro' storm, their cries rang out
like the coming victory's chime."

The following lines, from the collection *Fra Vaar til Høst* (From Spring to Autumn), 1894, are the expression of a mood and a time that is weary of Christianity and Civilization:

"No longer are they fighting by our side,
the glorious gods who in the Grecian morning
sprang from Life's need of wisdom, freedom, beauty.
No more they walk with us; long since they paled,
when fell the dart of sin on trembling mortals,
with fear, remorse, and sickly, craven thoughts,—
and ghastly Death first entering paled the world.
Now sits he lurking under every hour
with wily serpent's power-sapping eye,
watching in stolid scorn his certain prey,
and through the woods a sigh goes in the evening:
Pan, the great Pan, is dead. . . ."

The most interesting among our *fin-de-siècle* poets—and the more interesting here as his poems *Digte,* 1893, have been translated into English [1]—is SIGBJØRN OBSTFELDER (1866–1900). Always pondering the basic questions, with an endless longing after the Ideal, he has the solemn *vates*-conception of the poet as the priest of the sacred human life. As a true mystic he sees the great in the small and the world within : " Within me trembles the whole woof of the world. . . . Behind my closed eyes I see the heavenly bodies flying, rolling as in that sea of colour which was before creation. . . . I see eternities in my brain, millenniums that have rolled on, their echo do I hear in the convolutions of the brain. . . . I see worlds flaring in order to produce one vibration in my soul."

And still, when it comes to the world outside, he believes that he must have come to a wrong planet. He wanders over it in a somnambulistic way, dreaming—not unlike the Richard Jefferies of *The Story of My Heart*—of a civilization that shall fold itself like a live, plastic garment round the soul of man. In this attitude of expectation he is by the side of more active seers in the present, who " dream the impossible dream, and it comes true." Obstfelder's form is highly individual, irregular, following the changing moods, from rhythmical prose to wholly formed stanza. His characteristic sensitive-plant poetry—with single-word lines that wistfully detach themselves like falling leaves—at the time challenged easy parody. Occasionally, however, the life within surges out to greet the wilder play of Nature, and Pan is living still, as in the following lines :

THE HURRICANE

" Wind, storm, hurricane !
Naked will I bathe in your surging.
Ho ! see my white arms !
My hair flies, hallo !
Play with my hair, hurricane !

Blow,
Unfold the broad wings of my soul !
My soul wraps the world :
Uranus trembles within.

Hurricane, I am naked !
As thou have I thrown myself into
Earth's broad, swaying grass !

[1] Paul Selver, " Sheldonian Series," No. 6, Oxford.

Mine arms exult towards space,
the space of the world,
hallo!

Come, let us play,
plunge into the ocean!
Come, whirling leaves!
Come, ravens, sharks, waves!
Come, furious clouds,
We dance, we dance,
You and I!"

The singers of the present, as Olaf Bull, imaginative and pictorial, Alf Larsen, with his sombre winter-scenes from round the Norway coast, and the melodious Herman Wildenwey, seem with all their lovely trills like visiting birds of passage, and not very strongly bound to land and people. In the preface to a selection of poems by Wildenwey, *Digte i Utvalg*, 1917, Dr. Georg Brandes commends the poet as a charming trifler, open, unaffected, waggish, full of reckless grace. Not a mere trifler either, but serious in his worship of sun and air, which may be a needful antidote against the wine- and tobacco-reeking haunts of the fashionable present. One might not, with Dr. Brandes, protest so strongly against coupling the Song of Songs with the name of the much-experienced Solomon; but the poet's recklessness occasionally leads him farther astray, outside the bounds of taste. It is tiring also to have the *moon* so regularly connected with *brass*, whether it be described as a plate, as a shark, or as piling the lake with a column of glittering coin. It is pleasanter, because more natural, to contemplate with Olaf Bull the moon's "golden geography," or with Collett Vogt's tramp the sinking sun "as brand-new copper 'gainst the night." But little, lovely, moony nights, and alternating moods of sadness and waggishness—or even "plesance and half-wonder"—are not what we most could wish from poetry. Since Wergeland and Bjørnson, the Norwegian wants poetry of the fullest life, not only of impressions and sensations, but of will and of vision, and there are signs of the return of a muse with bolder sweep.

In departing, we will again, as when first approaching, see Norway through the eyes of a poet, this time one of our youngest, Arnulf Øverland:

NORGE[1]

By Arnulf Øverland (verses 1–9)

"Skaberen reiste et trodsig fjeld
i det öde hav.
Han dækket med skoge det östlige held;
mot vest blev det graat av lav.

Han sendte en storm fra den kolde pol,
og landet blev hvitt av sne.
Og siden saa tok han den gule sol;
den mötte han mörket med.

Da ligger et raat og et ragget land
og ryker av skodde og sol.
Men skaberen skaper en kvinde og mand;
saa sætter han sig i sin stol.
Og mennesket steller med stor forstand
og bygger sig hus og bol.

Det labber i skogen. Det lever og gror
i mark og myr.
Der bryter et underlig, rustent kor
mot dagen, saa saare den gryr.
Der löftes en lovsang i sterke ord
fra lodne, ensomme dyr.

Elgen gaar i den lave aas
og snöfter mot stjernernes flok.
Björnen basker med bondens laas,
og fuglen flöiter sin lokk.

Skarven staar paa det siste skjær
paa randen av verdens rum.
Den vaakner og skriker mot himmelens hær
—og natten blir dobbelt stum.

Mörket ruger det halve aar
over berg og dal.
Sneen falder og natten raar,
og mennesket længter sig gal.

Bart imot blæst fra den nære pol
ligger det hvite land
og venter den kjære, forvildede sol
og blotter sin magre strand.

Og solen kommer med eventyr
fra en salig kyst.
Og markerne mylrer av fugle og dyr,
Og hvert sva blir en have av lyst."

[1] From the Collection, *Advent*, 1915. The lines quoted are the opening stanzas of a Cantata for the centenary in 1914.

NORWAY

"The Lord, He raised a stubborn rock
in the wide, wild sea.
With woods He clothed the eastern slope,
whilst the west was lichen-grey.

He sent a storm from the icy pole,
and the land was white with snow.
And then He took the yellow sun,
and met the dark with its glow.

There lies a raw and rugged land
with sun-shot, mist-racked air.
The Lord creates a woman and man—
then seats himself in His chair;
and man displays what wits he can,
and builds him dwellings there.

Footfalls in the forest: it lives and grows
the fells among.
Towards day-breaking a sound there goes,
a wondrous husky song,
as if from the shaggy beasts arose
a pæan in accents strong.

The elk stalks along the low hillside
and snorts at the flock of stars.
A bird is calling—and Bruin works
at the farmer's lock and bars.

A cormorant stands on the outmost rock,
where the edge of the world falls plumb.
It wakens and shrieks toward the heavenly flock,
—and the night is doubly dumb.

Night is reigning through half the year
over dale and height.
Snow is driving through darkness drear,
and man is pining for light.

Bare to the blast of the near north pole
lieth this snow-white land,
and waits for her lover, the wandering sun,
on her hard and barren strand.

And the sun returns with fairy-tales
from southern skies;
with birds and beasts are filled the vales,
and each rock is a paradise."

LIST OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
AANRUD, HANS.			
Lisbeth Longsark (Sidsel Sidserk).	....	Oxford Univ. Press.	1918 or 1919
ASBJØRNSEN, P. C.			
Tales from the Fjeld [51 Tales].	G. W. Dasent.	...	1874
Round the Yule-Log [33 Tales].	H. L. Brækstad.	Sampson Low & Co.	1881
ASBJØRNSEN AND MOE.			
East of the Sun and West of the Moon [15 Tales].	G. W. Dasent.	Hodder & Stoughton.	1914
Popular Tales from the Norse [74 Tales].	,,	D. Douglas, Edinburgh.	1903
Popular Tales from the Norse [72 Tales].	,,	Routledge's London Library.	1907
Tales from the Norse [32 Selected].	,,	Blackie & Son.	1906
Fairy Tales from the Far North [Illustrated, 40 Tales].	H. L. Brækstad.	David Nutt.	1897
BJØRNSON, BJØRNSTJERNE.			
Three Comedies :			
The Newly-Married Couple.	Sharp, R. F.	Dent's Everyman's Library.	1912
Leonarda . . .	,,	,,	
A Gauntlet . . .	,,	,,	
Three Dramas :			
The Editor . . .	,,	,,	1914
The Bankrupt . .	,,	,,	
The King . . .	,,	,,	
Plays : First Series :			
The Gauntlet . .	Edwin Bjørkman.	Duckworth & Co.	1913
Beyond Our Power .	,,	,,	
The New System .	,,	,,	
Plays : Second Series :			
Love and Geography	,,	,,	1914
Beyond Human Might	,,	,,	
Laboremus . .	,,	,,	

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
BJØRNSON, BJØRNSTJERNE (*contd.*).			
Sigurd Slembe . .	Wm. Morton Payne.	Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston [Mass.].	1888
Mary, Queen of Scots .	August Sahlberg.	Published in Norway.	1912
The Newly-Married Couple.	S. and E. Hjerleid.	Simpkin, Marshall & Co.	1870
A Lesson in Marriage [De Nygifte].	Grace Isabel Colbron.	Brandu's, New York.	1911
A Gauntlet . . .	H. L. Brækstad.	S. French.	1890
A Gauntlet . . .	Osman Edwards.	Longmans & Co.	1894
Pastor Sang [Over Ævne]	William Wilson.	Longmans & Co.	1893
Paul Lange and Tora Parsberg.	H. L. Brækstad.	Harper & Brothers.	1899
Laboremus . . .	....	Chapman & Hall.	1901
Novels [13 vols.] . .	Edited by Ed. Gosse.	W. Heinemann.	1895–1909
Love and Life in Norway [Synnøvé Solbakken].	A. Bethell and A. Plesner.	Cassel, Petter & Galpin.	1870
Synnové Solbakken [Author's Edition].	R. B. Anderson.	Houghton, Mifflin & Co.	1881
Synnøvé Solbakken .	Julie Sutter.	Macmillan & Co.	1881
Arne : A Sketch of Norwegian Country Life.	A. Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.	Alex. Strahan.	1866
Arne : and The Fisher Lassie.	Walter Low.	G. Bell & Sons (Bohn's Library).	1890
Ovind, The Eagle's Nest, The Father.	S. and E. Hjerleid.	Simpkin, Marshall & Co.	1869
The Happy Lad, The Eagle's Nest, The Father.	....	Blackie & Sons.	1882
A Happy Boy . .	R. B. Anderson.	Bickers & Son.	1884
The Fisher Girl . .	S. and E. Hjerleid.	...	1871
The Fisher Maiden .	R. B. Anderson.	Houghton, Mifflin & Co.	1869
The Bridal March, and [Eight] Other Stories [Author's Edition].	,,	,,	1882
The Bridal March .	J. E. Williams.	Digby, Long & Co.	1893
The Bridal March, and One Day.	Edited by Ed. Gosse.	W. Heinemann.	1896
Captain Mansana and Other Stories [The Railroad, etc., and Dust] [Author's Edn.].	R. B. Anderson.	Bickers & Son.	1884
Norway Illustrated [contains A Holiday Trip [En ny Feriefart]].	T. M. W[ilson ?].	Ed. B. Giertsen, Bergen.	1888
The Heritage of the Kurts [Det Flager]. .	Cecil Fairfax.	W. Heinemann.	1890
In God's Way . .	Elizabeth Carmichael.	,,	1890
Poems and Songs in the Original Metres.	A. Hubbell Palmer.	Amer. Scand. Found., Oxford Univ. Press, H. Milford.	1915
Arnljot Gelline . .	Wm. Morton Payne	Amer. Scand. Found.	1917

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
BOJER, JOHAN.			
The Power of a Lie	Jessie Muir.	Hodder & Stoughton.	1919
The Great Hunger	W. J. A. Worster and C. Archer.	,,	1918
The Face of the World	Jessie Muir.	,,	1919
Our Kingdom (First issued under the title Treacherous Ground.)	,,	,,	1920
Life	,,	Gyldendal.	1922
God and Woman [Dyrendal].	,,	Hodder & Stoughton.	1921
The Last of the Vikings	,,	,,	1923
BULL, JACOB B.			
Fridtjof Nansen: A Book for the Young.	Rev. M. R. Barnard.	Isbister & Co.	1898
COLLIN, CHRISTEN.			
Literature and Life [in "Ethical Democracy"]	Edited by Stanton Coit.	Grant Richards.	1900
The War against War	Prefaced by Wm. Archer.	Macmillan.	1917
DAHL, JOHAN A.			
Norwegian and Swedish Poems.	J. A. D.	The Translator: Bergen.	1872
FRIIS, JENS. A.			
Laila: Sketches from Finmarken.	Henry John, Earl of Ducie.	S.P.C.K.	1883
The Monastery of Petschenga.	H. Repp.	E. Stock.	1896
Sporting Life on the Norwegian Fjelds.	W. G. Lock.	Published by the Translator: Woolwich.	1878
GARBORG, ARNE.			
The Lost Father	....	America.	1920
HAMSUN, KNUT.			
Growth of the Soil	W. Worster.	Gyldendal.	1920
Pan	,,	,,	1920
Shallow Soil [Ny Jord]	C. C. Hyllested.	Duckworth & Co.	1914
Hunger	George Egerton.	,,	1921
Mothwise [Sværmere]	W. Worster.	Gyldendal.	1921
Wanderers [Autumn: with Muted Strings].	,,	,,	1922
Victoria	Arthur G. Chater.	,,	1923
Children of the Age	....	,,	1924
HJORT, JOHAN.			
The Unity of Science	....	Gyldendal.	1921

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
HOLBERG, LUDVIG.			
Three Comedies:			
Henry and Pernilla .	H. W. L. Hime.	Longmans.	1912
Captain Bombastes Thunderton.	,,	,,	
Scatterbrains . .	,,	,,	
Three Comedies:			
Jeppe of the Hill .	O. J. Campbell and Frederic Schenck.	Amer. Scand. Found., Oxford Univ. Press.	1915
The Political Tinker .			
Erasmus Montanus. .	,,		
Memoirs of Lewis Holberg.	....	Hunt & Clarke, London.	1826
A Journey to the World Underground by Niels Klim.	....	Thomas North, London.	1828
An Introduction to Universal History.	Gregory Sharpe.	A. Lind, London.	1755
IBSEN, HENRIK.			
Collections.			
The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, with Introduction by Wm. Archer [12 vols.]:			
1. Lady Inger of Ostraat.	Charles Archer.	W. Heinemann, London, and Scribner, New York.	1908
The Feast at Solhaug	Wm. Archer and Mary Morison.		
Love's Comedy .	C. H. Herford.		
2. The Vikings at Helgeland.	Wm. Archer.	,,	1906
The Pretenders .	,,		
3. Brand . . .	C. H. Herford.	,,	1906
4. Peer Gynt . .	Wm. and Charles Archer.	,,	1907
5. Emperor and Galilean	Wm. Archer.	,,	1907
6. The League of Youth	,,	,,	1906
Pillars of Society .	,,		
7. A Doll's House .	,,	,,	1906
Ghosts . . .	,,		
8. An Enemy of the People.	Mrs. E. Marx-Aveling.	,,	1907
The Wild Duck .	Mrs. F. E. Archer.		
9. Rosmersholm . .	Charles Archer.	,,	1907
The Lady from the Sea.	Mrs. F. E. Archer.		
10. Hedda Gabler . .	Edm. Gosse and Wm. Archer.	,,	1907
The Master Builder	,,		
11. Little Eyolf . .	Wm. Archer.	,,	1907
John Gabriel Borkman.	,,		
When We Dead Awaken.	,,		
12. From Ibsen's Workshop (Notes, Drafts of Plays, etc.).	Arthur G. Chater.	,,	1912

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
IBSEN, HENRIK (*contd.*).			
Ghosts and Two Other Plays (The Warriors at Helgeland; An Enemy of the People).	R. F. Sharp.	Dent's Everyman.	1911
The Pretenders; Pillars of Society; Rosmersholm.	,,	,,	1913
The Pillars of Society [3 Plays]. Introduction by Havelock Ellis.	....	The Scott Library.	1890
Prose Dramas [5 vols.], edited by Wm. Archer	....	,,	1890–91
Lady Inger of Ostraat; Love's Comedy; The League of Youth.	R. F. Sharp.	Dent's Everyman.	1915
The Doll's House; The Wild Duck; The Lady from the Sea.	,, ,, Mrs. E. Marx-Aveling.	,,	1910
Early Plays: Catiline . . . The Warrior's Barrow Olaf Liljekrans . .	A. Orbeck. ,, ,,	Amer. Scand. Found., Oxford Univ. Press.	1921
Brand: A Dramatic Poem.	W. Wilson (in prose).	Methuen & Co.	1891
Brand: A Dramatic Poem.	F. E. Garrett (in the original metres).	T. Fisher Unwin.	1894
Brand: A Dramatic Poem.	F. E. Garrett.	Dent's Everyman.	1906
Brand: A Dramatic Poem.	Miles Menander Dawson (in original metres).	Four Seas Co., Boston.	1916
Brand: With Introduction and Notes.	C. H. Herford (in original metres).	W. Heinemann.	1894
The Master Builder (with Bibliography and Appendix.)	Edm. Gosse and Wm. Archer.	,,	1893
Nora [Et Dukkehjem]	Henrietta Frances Lord.	Griffith, Farran & Co.	1893
A Doll's House . .	Wm. Archer.	Fisher Unwin.	1889
Lyrical Poems (selected)	R. A. Streatfeild.	Elkin Mathews's Vigo Cabinet Series.	1902
Poems: Lyrics and Poems from Ibsen, including songs from the dramas and scene from Aases Død. (Add. a rev. ed. of G.'s version of "Brand"), collected and arranged by Mrs. F. E. Garrett, Introd. by P. H. Wicksteed.	F. E. Garrett.	E. P. Dutton, New York; Dent & Sons, London.	1912
Rosmersholm . .	L. N. Parker.	Griffith, Farran & Co.	1889
Rosmersholm . .	Charles Archer.	Walter Scott.	1906
The Wild Duck. . .	Mrs. F. E. Archer.	,,	1905
Peer Gynt (with Two Tales by Asbjørnsen)	Wm. and Ch. Archer.	,,	1892

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
IBSEN, HENRIK (*contd.*).			
Peer Gynt . . .	R. Ellis Roberts.	Martin Secker.	1912
Peer Gynt (Selections)	Isabella M. Pagan.	Theosophical Publ. Society.	1909
Peer Gynt . . .	R. F. Sharp.	Dent's Everyman.	1921
Hedda Gabler . .	Edm. Gosse.	W. Heinemann.	1891
Emperor and Galilean	Catherine Ray.	Samuel Tinsley.	1876
Love's Comedy . .	C. H. Herford.	Duckworth & Co.	1900
The Correspondence of Henrik Ibsen.	Mary Morison.	Hodder & Stoughton.	1905
Speeches and New Letters.	Arne Kildal.	Frank Palmer.	1911
IBSEN, SIGURD.			
Human Quintessence .	M. H. Janson.	Frank Palmer.	1913
Robert Frank [Play] .	,,	Scribner, New York.	1914
JANSON, KRISTOFER.			
The Spell-Bound Fiddler	Auber Forestier.	S. C. Griggs & Co., Chicago.	1880
JÆGER, HENRIK.			
Henrik Ibsen: A Critical Biography.	W. M. Payne.	McClurg & Co., Chicago.	1901
Life of Henrik Ibsen .	Clara Bell and Edm. Gosse.	W. Heinemann.	1890
KIELLAND, ALEXANDER.			
Garman and Worse .	W. W. Kettlewell.	Kegan Paul & Co.	1885
Skipper Worse . .	Henry John, Earl of Ducie.	Sampson Low & Co.	1885
Tales of Two Countries [10 Tales].	Wm. Archer.	Osgood, M'Ilvaine & Co., Red Letter Stories.	1891
Norse Tales and Sketches [10 Items].	R. L. Cassie.	Elliot Stock.	1897
Napoleon's Men and Methods.	Joseph M'Cabe.	A. Owen & Co.	1907
THE KING'S MIRROR [Kongespeilet].	L. M. Larson.	Amer. Scand. Found., Oxford Univ. Press.	1917
KRÆMMER, ELIAS.			
Dry Fish and Wet [Tales from "Byens Fædre" and "Glade Borgere"].	W. Worster.	Gyldendal, London.	1922
LIE, JONAS.			
The Visionary [Den Fremsynte].	Jessie Muir.	Hodder Bros.	1894
Little Grey: The Pony of Nordfjord.	Hon. Mrs. Arbuthnott.	T. C. Jack, Edinburgh.	1873

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
LIE, JONAS (*contd.*).			
A Norse Love Story[The Pilot and His Wife]	Mrs. Ole Bull.	S. C. Griggs & Co., Chicago.	1876
The Barque *Future* .	,,	,,	1879
The Commodore's Daughters.	H. L. Brækstad and Gertrude Hughes.	W. Heinemann.	1892
One of Life's Slaves .	Jessie Muir.	Hodder Bros.	1895
Niobe	H. L. Brækstad.	W. Heinemann.	1897
Weird Tales from the Northern Seas (Trold) [Illust. by Laurence Housman].	R. Nisbet Bain.	Kegan Paul & Co.	1893
The Family at Gilje .	S. Coffin Eastman.	Amer. Scand. Found., Oxford Univ. Press, H. Milford.	1920
MUNCH, ANDREAS.			
Solomon de Caus .	J. Chapman.	Privately printed.	1855
Lord William Russell .	,,	,,	1858
William and Rachel Russell.	J. H. Burt.	Trübner & Co.	1862
The Maid of Norway .	Mrs. Robert Birkbeck.	Chatto & Windus.	1878
NANSEN, FRIDTJOF.			
The First Crossing of Greenland.	H. M. Gepp.	Longmans.	1890
The First Crossing of Greenland [Abridged Edition].	,,	,,	1892
Eskimo Life . . .	Wm. Archer.	,,	1893
Farthest North . .	....	Constable.	1897
Farthest North . .	....	Newnes.	1898
In Northern Mists .	A. G. Chater.	W. Heinemann.	1911
Through Siberia . .	,,	,,	1914
OBSTFELDER, SIGBJØRN.			
Poems [Norwegian facing English].	Paul Selver.	B. Blackwell, Oxford (Sheldonian Masterpieces).	1920
PRYDZ, ALVILDE.			
The Heart of the Northern Sea (Gunvor Thorsdatter in Hærø).	T. Engdahl and J. Rew.	G. Allen.	1907
Sanpriel : The Promised Land.	Hester Coddington.	Allen & Unwin.	1916
RING, BARBRA.			
Into the Dark . .	W. Emmé.	Gyldendal, London.	1921
SKRAM, AMALIE.			
Professor Hieronimus .	A. Stronach and G. B. Jacobi.	Lane, London.	1899

	Translated by	Published by	Year.
THIIS, JENS.			
Leonardo Da Vinci [Illustrated].	Jessie Muir.	Herbert Jenkins.	1913
Modern Norwegian Art [Illustrated] [In "Scandinavian Art" (by three authors)].	Sigurd B. Hustvedt.	Amer. Scand. Found., Oxford Univ. Press, H. Milford.	1922
THORESEN, MAGDALENE.			
Old Olaf, in M. A. Goldschmidt's "The Flying Mail," etc.	Carl Larsen.	Sevier, Francis & Co., Boston [Mass.].	1870
Signe's History . .	Rev. M. R. Barnard.	Chapman & Hall.	1865
UNDSET, SIGRID.			
Jenny	Mrs. Gripenwald.	Gyldendal, London.	1920
The Garland [Kristin Lavransdatter, I.].	....	,,	1922
WIERS-JENSSEN, H.			
Anne Pedersdotter, a Drama.	John Masefield.	Little, Brown & Co., Boston [Mass.].	1917

	Written by	Published by	Year.
NORWAY.			
The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway.	H. L. Brækstad.	D. Nutt.	1905
The Land of the Midnight Sun.	P. Du Chaillu.	G. Newnes.	1899
Official Publication for the Paris Exhibition, 1900.	Edited by Sten Konow and Karl Fischer.	Christiania.	1900
History of the Norwegian People: I.–II.	Knut Gjerset.	Macmillan, New York.	1915
A Few Facts from Norway's History and Politics.	....	Christiania.	1905
Norway at Home [Illustrated].	T. B. Willson.	G. Newnes.	1908
Scandinavia of the Scandinavians [Illust.].	H. Goddard Leach.	Isaac Pitman & Sons.	1915
North Star Stories: Sixteen Stories from the Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Old Norse.	....	K. C. Holter Publ. Co.	1920

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